



MEMORANDUM

To: Jordan Isrow, Vice Mayor, City of Parkland

From: Anthony C. Soroka, City Attorney, City of Parkland

Date: May 21, 2024

RE: **City Attorney Opinion 24-01: Invitation to Vice Mayor Isrow to Participate in the Combat Antisemitism Movement's U.S. Mayors Solidarity Mission to Israel**

You received an invitation (the "Invitation") from the Combat Antisemitism Movement organization ("CAM") to attend the U.S. Mayor's solidarity mission to Israel, scheduled for June 4-11, 2024 (the "Mission"), which includes an invitation to participate as an honorary guest in the 2024 MuniWorld Summit, "a premier global summit in Tel Aviv focused on smart city innovation that brings together municipal leaders from around the world" (the "Summit").

The itinerary for the Mission includes multiple roundtable discussions, and the Chief Government Affairs Officer for CAM who emailed you the Invitation confirmed to me by phone that the Mission is an interactive experience, and that you are being invited to share and discuss your experiences as a local elected official with other elected officials at the Mission. The brochure for the Summit states "[t]ogether we will explore how to harness cooperation and solidarity towards a brighter future for all," and notes that attendees are able to take part in roundtables, panels, and keynote speeches by experts and leaders". You have stated that you intend to actively participate in the roundtable and/or panel discussions and share experiences from the City of Parkland. The Combat Hate Foundation, a 501(c)(3) corporation that operates CAM, (the "Foundation") has offered to pay all expenses associated with your attendance at the Mission and Summit, including all travel, meal, and accommodation expenses.

You have asked for an opinion as to whether you may accept the Foundation's offer to pay for your travel, meal, and accommodation expenses in connection with your participation in the Mission and Summit. It is our opinion, for the reasons set forth below, that you may accept payment of your actual, reasonable travel, lodging and food and beverage expenses by the Foundation for your participation at the Mission and Summit, without incurring any reimbursement or reporting obligations for such expenses. However, there may be reporting requirements and other considerations for an extended stay in Israel, or other expenses that are not incurred in connection with your participation in the Mission.

State Ethics Laws

City of Parkland Commissioners are subject to State and Broward County ethics laws that regulate the conduct of elected officials. The State Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees is set forth in Chapter 112, Part III, Fla. Stat. State ethics laws prohibit an elected official from accepting anything

of value, “based upon any understanding that the vote, official action, or judgment of the public officer, employee, local government attorney, or candidate would be influenced thereby”¹ or when the official “knows, or, with the exercise of reasonable care, should know, that it was given to influence a vote or other action in which the officer...was expected to participate in his or her official capacity.”² Additionally, state law prohibits an elected official from corruptly using or attempting “to use his or her official position or any property or resource which may be within his or her trust, or perform his or her official duties, to secure a special privilege, benefit, or exemption for himself, herself, or others.”³ Based on the Invitation, CAM invited you to the Mission and Summit based on your role as an elected official. There is no indication that you solicited the Invitation. Further, there are no facts presented that indicate the Invitation is based on any understanding or knowledge that the Foundation’s payment of expenses is being provided to influence your future official actions.

State and County ethics laws regulate the acceptance of “gifts” by elected officials. Section 112.3148, Florida Statutes, sets forth reporting requirements and regulations prohibiting the receipt of certain “gifts” by elected officials. “Gift” is generally defined as anything of value for which equal or greater consideration is not given within 90 days, including “[t]ransportation, other than that provided to a public officer or employee *by an agency* in relation to officially approved governmental business, lodging, or parking.”⁴ However, the definition of “gift” excludes “[a]n honorarium or an expense related to an honorarium event paid to a person or the person’s spouse.”⁵ An “honorarium” means “a speech, address, oration, or other oral presentation by the reporting individual”.⁶ The multiple roundtable and panel discussions, as part of the overall Mission, constitute an honorarium event. The Florida Commission on Ethics has interpreted expenses related to an honorarium event to include “the payment or provision of actual and reasonable transportation, lodging, and food and beverage expenses related to the honorarium event.”⁷ There is no indication that the Foundation is an entity from which you would be prohibited from accepting an honorarium pursuant to Section 112.3149(3), Florida Statutes, which prohibits accepting an honorarium from a political committee, a vendor doing business with the City, or from a lobbyist who lobbies the City (or from the employer, principal, partner or firm of such lobbyist). Accordingly, the Foundation’s payment of your actual, reasonable travel, lodging and food and beverage expenses related to the event does not constitute a “gift” under applicable law.

Broward County Code of Ethics

The Broward County Code of Ethics for Elected Officials (the “County Ethics Code”) provides additional regulations on gifts that are in some ways more stringent than provided in state law. The definition of “gift” is not specifically defined in the County Ethics Code; however, Section 1-19(b) Definitions, states “[a]ll operative words or terms used in this Elected Official Code of Ethics but not defined herein shall be as defined, in order of priority in the event of inconsistency, by Part III of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, the Broward County Code of Ordinances, and the Broward County Administrative Code”. Thus, the County Ethics Code defines “gift” in the same manner as the State Code of Ethics.

¹ See Section 112.313(2), Fla. Stat.

² See Section 112.313(4), Fla. Stat.

³ See Section 112.313(6), Fla. Stat.

⁴ See Section 112.312(12)(a), Fla. Stat. (emphasis supplied).

⁵ See Section 112.312(12)(b)(3), Fla. Stat.

⁶ See Section 112.3149(1), Fla. Stat.

⁷ See Commission on Ethics Opinion 91-57.

The County Ethics Code prohibits elected officials from receiving any “gifts” from lobbyists, vendors, or contractors that are in excess of \$5.00.⁸ The Foundation is not a lobbyist, vendor or contractor of the City. The County Ethics Code also prohibits receipt of any “gifts” received in an elected official’s official capacity from other sources, in excess of \$50.00.⁹ However, as stated above, an honorarium or an expense related to an honorarium event paid to a person or the person’s spouse is not considered a “gift” under the state law definition, and the County Ethics Code defines “gift” in the same manner as the state law.

Conclusion

Given the facts presented, we conclude that that the relevant State and County ethics laws do not prohibit you from accepting the payment of your actual, reasonable travel, lodging and food and beverage expenses by the Foundation in connection with your trip to Israel to participate in panel and roundtable discussions, and to receive information and training, on combating antisemitism and hatred and smart city innovation as part of the Mission. Your stay (as it relates to the Foundation’s payment of expenses) must be reasonably limited to the time frame of the Mission and the expenses paid should be limited to those actual expenses related to your attendance at the Mission events, including the Summit. Given that the payment of such expenses is not considered a “gift” under State and County ethics laws, you can accept the Foundation’s payment of such expenses, without any reimbursement or reporting obligations.

This Opinion is provided pursuant to Subsection 8 of the County Ethics Code, which allows an Elected Official to request an advisory opinion about how the County Ethics Code applies to his or her own situation. “Requests for opinions shall state all material facts necessary for the advising attorney to understand the circumstances and render a complete and correct opinion, and such facts shall be recited in the issued opinion.” In addition, “until amended or revoked, an advisory opinion rendered pursuant to this section shall be binding on the conduct of the Elected Official covered by the opinion unless material facts were omitted or misstated in the request for advisory opinion. If the Elected Official acts in accordance with a binding advisory opinion, the Elected Official’s conduct may not be found to be in violation of the Broward County Elected Official Code of Ethics. However, any opinion rendered under this section shall not be binding as to whether the Elected Official’s action complies with state or federal ethics requirements.”

Assuming that you have disclosed all pertinent facts to us, you may use this Opinion as a “safe harbor” under the County Ethics Ordinance should any questions arise concerning the Opinion provided herein.

If you need any additional guidance regarding this matter, please contact us.



Anthony C. Soroka
City Attorney

Enclosures

⁸ See Section 1-19(c)(1)(a), County Code of Ethics.

⁹ See Section 1-19(c)(1)(b), County Code of Ethics.

Anthony C. Soroka

From: Jordan Isrow <jisrow@cityofparkland.org>
Sent: Thursday, May 9, 2024 10:25 PM
To: Anthony C. Soroka
Subject: Fwd: Invitation to Join the Combat Antisemitism Movement's U.S. Mayors Solidarity Mission to Israel
Attachments: MuniWorld_brochure_New_Converted (1).pdf

Hey Anthony,

I received the below invite to join a mission to Israel hosted by Combat Antisemitism Movement, a non profit organization. I am strongly considering attending, but wanted to first confirm whether I am allowed to accept and have my travel, meal and accommodation expenses paid for to attend.

Please let me know so I may proceed accordingly.

Thank you,
Jordan

Jordan Isrow
Vice Mayor
City of Parkland
6600 University Drive
Parkland, FL 33067
O: (954) 757- 4170



<https://link.edgepilot.com/s/6d6604b2/Eu9UWs3qxEKZ9Ar097qjXw?u=http://www.cityofparkland.org/>

The City of Parkland is governed by the Public Records Act as set forth in Chapter 119, Florida Statutes. E-mails are subject to the Public Records Act and are public records subject to disclosure. All e-mails sent and received are retained as public records. If you do not want your e-mail address released in a response to a public records request, do not send electronic mail to this entity. Instead, contact this office by phone or in writing.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lisa Katz <lisa@combatantisemitism.org>
Date: May 9, 2024 at 6:10:50 PM EDT
To: Jordan Isrow <jisrow@cityofparkland.org>
Subject: Invitation to Join the Combat Antisemitism Movement's U.S. Mayors Solidarity Mission to Israel
Reply-To: lisa@combatantisemitism.org

Dear Mayor Isrow,

I hope this message finds you well. This is Lisa Katz, the Chief Government Affairs Officer at the Combat Antisemitism Movement, as well as a former elected Mayor from New Castle, New York.

I am delighted to invite you to join us on a U.S. Mayors' solidarity mission to Israel, scheduled for **June 4-11, 2024**. Organized by the Combat Antisemitism Movement, the mission will bring together a select group of leading mayors on an unparalleled delegation trip to Israel filled with discovery, learning, and solidarity.

It also presents the opportunity to participate as honorary guests in the MuniExpo Innovation Fair, a premier global summit in Tel Aviv focused on smart city innovation that brings together municipal leaders from around the world.

All travel, meal, and accommodation expenses will be paid by the Combat Hate Foundation, a 501(c)(3) corporation.

You truly will not want to miss this delegation. I eagerly await your response, and we are ready to assist in coordinating your participation should you be available.

To confirm your participation in the Mayors' Solidarity Mission, kindly register at https://link.edgepilot.com/s/fb1809df/K_8GPMvNe0qrtl1wXZpNqA?u=https://info.combatantisemitism.org/mayorsisrael as soon as possible to allow us sufficient time for logistical preparations.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Warm regards,

Lisa Katz

Lisa Katz

Chief Government Affairs Officer

[Combat Antisemitism Movement](#)

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MuniWorld 2024 Conference - Israeli Revival:

Each year, as part of its MuniExpo, the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel hosts the MuniWorld conference focused on connecting cities and local authorities around the world with those in Israel.

This year, in the wake of the October 7th attacks and war that has followed, those connections are more important than ever.

Honoring the resilience and efforts of Jewish Communities worldwide, MuniWorld 2024 brings together mayors, senior government officials, and municipal leaders from around the world. Together we will explore how to harness cooperation and solidarity towards a brighter future for all.

This year's gathering will also provide an opportunity for the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel and Israeli mayors, which were truly moved and encouraged by the global support and concern expressed by their colleagues and partners around the globe, to extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation.





MuniWorld 2024 will delve into critical issues stemming from the October 7th attack, including:

- Communal and Municipal Recovery After Crisis
- Balancing Emergency Response with Municipal Routine
- Securing Municipal Infrastructure Against Threats
- Municipal Leadership as a Catalyst for Tolerance and Inclusion

MuniWorld 2024 attendees will be able to take part in:

- The MuniExpo 2024 Opening Event
- All MuniWorld 2024 activities and excursions
- Round tables, panels and keynote speeches by experts and leaders
- The MuniExpo 2024 Exhibition dedicated to urban innovation and smart cities, featuring 170 Israeli and global companies and Start-Ups

For more information on the conference and expo, please visit:
<https://www.muniexpo.co.il/muni-world>

