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PRESENTATION OF COMMEMORATIVE GAVEL
FOR SERVICE AS CHAIRMAN
TO
ART GRAHAM

December 10, 2019

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: We have, before we get
3 started today, a little sad news. I'm sure most of
4 you know that one of our dear friends, one of our
5 staff members, a person that you see smiling every
6 single time you walk in -- especially the
7 Commissioners -- we walk into the door and, doesn't
8 matter what kind of day you had, doesn't matter how
9 much you argued with your aide upstairs before you
10 came downstairs, she's there.

11 She's got a warm smile and she welcomes
12 everybody that's here, and it makes you feel good
13 about all that stuff. And we're going to miss
14 her -- is Ruth Nettles.

15 She passed away -- I believe it was a heart
16 attack, but at such a young age, it -- it was a
17 tragedy, truly a shame. And this agency has always
18 been so tight and, as you saw during the awards,
19 she's going to be truly missed.

20 And the invocation and pledge is going to be
21 given by Commissioner Brown. If you'd like to join
22 us in the invocation and pledge, if I can get you
23 to stand and bow your heads, please.

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN: Thank you, Chairman.

25 (Pledge and invocation given.)

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Okay. So, let the record
2 show it is Tuesday, December the 10th. And -- oh,
3 before we start the meeting, Commissioner Brown.

4 COMMISSIONER BROWN: Apologize for jumping in
5 here so -- so quickly before the meeting, but it's
6 this time of year and this is our last agenda
7 conference. And I wanted to take a moment of
8 personal privilege as well to recognize our
9 Chairman.

10 After dealing with hours of scheduling
11 conflicts among many of us here and juggling HR
12 issues, presiding over hundreds of hours of
13 hearings, agenda conferences, IAs, workshops --
14 although, not that many workshops because he's not
15 a big fan of the workshops -- but lots of meetings
16 and serving as the ambassador to the Commission,
17 Chairman Graham has to be exhausted and burned out
18 at this point. And I know he -- he must be because
19 he hasn't just done it the past two years; he's
20 done it for almost six years, three different
21 times.

22 He is absolutely a glutton for punishment
23 because being chairman is -- is really a self-
24 sacrifice. It is really someone who is dedicated
25 to public service. And that is Chairman Graham.

1 He -- I -- I said that Commissioner Clark, at
2 the last meeting, is a natural-born leader. Well,
3 Chairman Graham absolutely epitomizes what it means
4 to be a leader. He has led our Commission, our
5 agency, with his vision and perseverance. And we
6 are very proud of him and the work that he's done.

7 And on behalf of the Commissioners and the
8 Comm- -- and the Agency, I'd like to present him
9 with his third plaque and -- but not just the
10 plaque; I also would like to give him a token of
11 the Commissioners' kindness and generosity for the
12 time you've served. Congratulations.

13 Please join me.

14 (Applause.)

15 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: The third time is a work of
16 art.

17 COMMISSIONER BROWN: It looks the same.

18 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: It's got all the different
19 times across the bottom there. That's awesome.
20 So, that means I can get rid of the first two?

21 COMMISSIONER BROWN: That's right. That's
22 right. Recycle.

23 (Laughter.)

24 COMMISSIONER BROWN: Thank you.

25 (Applause.)

1 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Well, number one, I'd just
2 like to thank God, my Lord, Jesus Christ. I think,
3 through Him, all things are possible. And without
4 Him, I wouldn't be here.

5 It's funny, when I first got here, I had a
6 reporter -- I won't mention the name -- we had a
7 private meeting and sat back and just talked about
8 the agency. And she thought it was a political
9 move for me to start the invocation and pledge.
10 And I told her politics had nothing to do with it.
11 I said, number one, I was shocked that we didn't do
12 it in this agency before we got here. But the
13 pledge -- you've all heard me talk about my dad.
14 I'm a proud military brat. That's just one of
15 those things you have to do.

16 And the invocation, I thank my -- my
17 colleagues because they -- they're the ones that
18 allowed me to do this. You have to get their
19 blessing to do it and it's something that started
20 nine and a half years ago. And, knowing our
21 incoming chairman-elect, it's going to go on for at
22 least another two more years. But I've always been
23 fortunate to -- that I had colleagues that allow
24 that to happen.

25 I want to thank Betty. You've mentioned her

1 earlier, with 45 years of service. She is truly
2 the ship captain. She's the one that keeps the
3 gemini in line. She's the one that reminds us of
4 things we have to do, places we have to be, things
5 we have to say.

6 I want to thank Jim, my aide. He's been my
7 confidante for about 20 years. He's put the words
8 in my mouth many times. He's -- he's had my back.
9 He's my sparring partner. He's my friend.

10 I wasn't going to say anything today, but both
11 Jim and Betty told me that I had to say a few words
12 because, as most of you know me, I like to give
13 speeches about as much as I like to hear them.

14 And so, that being the case -- I got this book
15 from Commissioner Fay about a month ago. And I
16 haven't had a chance to read it yet, but it's
17 called Love -- Love Your Enemies, by Arthur Brooks.
18 And the premise is that some people -- some
19 relationships get so contentious that you get to
20 the point where you just stop listening, be it your
21 marriage, be it at work with your colleagues, be it
22 whatever it is.

23 And if you see this picture back behind me --
24 every day I go to the gym, I see that up -- up on
25 the wall. And I think, if you picture back when I

1 first got here, my first 18 months, 2010, 2011,
2 this place was chaos.

3 You had Commissioners up here, fighting at the
4 dais, yelling and screaming. You had Commissioners
5 not even showing up, just calling in,
6 participating. You had ratepayers filing ethics
7 complaints against the Commissioners, recusals
8 against Commissioners. And I'll be the first to
9 tell you, I had them filed against me. And it was
10 just so cha- -- chaotic.

11 I got thrown in as Chairman that first year.
12 And, thank God, about six months into that -- we'll
13 refer to them as the "N"s. We had Commissioners
14 whose names started with "N." The "N"s left and
15 the "B"s arrived. And that was Commissioner Brown,
16 Commissioner Brisé, Commissioner Balbis, and
17 Executive Director Baez. And things changed.

18 You saw, overnight -- I mean, when I got here,
19 one of the rating agencies in -- in Wall Street had
20 us rated down to, like, the bottom 5 percent and,
21 over time, we've got it up. And now, I believe
22 we're like the top 5 percent.

23 And a lot of it comes down to transparency.
24 They want to know that you're thinking these things
25 through and they can see which direction you're

1 going. And I -- I think most of it came down to
2 the colleagues.

3 I had four -- I had four colleagues at that
4 time that -- we brought things together. We
5 started what we thought was Team Florida. And
6 rather than being five individuals, we became a
7 team.

8 We got the first person elected as president
9 of NARUC. We had the president of SEARUC. As time
10 went on, we had Commissioners leave. First one was
11 Commissioner Balbis, who was replaced by
12 Commissioner Patronis, who I thought did a
13 fantastic job.

14 And then Commissioner Patronis left -- I'm
15 sorry. Commissioner Edgar left and Doc showed up.
16 And Doc has got to be probably one of the most
17 intelligent guys that I know. And he's just so
18 inquisitive. And it definitely is a blessing to
19 have him on this Commission.

20 And then we had -- Commissioner Patronis left,
21 and then we had Gary Clark that came along. And
22 the only thing you can really call Gary is the
23 entrepreneur. He's one of those guys -- he's a
24 jack-of-all-trades. He's got his fingers in
25 everything, and he al- -- always does a fantastic

1 job.

2 And then we had -- Commissioner Brisé left.
3 And we had -- Commissioner Fay came along. And
4 finally, we had somebody who was going to give
5 Julie a -- a push when it comes to legal
6 interpretation. And they -- it's always great when
7 the two of them engage. And I think we always come
8 out with a better solution, but it's -- it's always
9 very good.

10 (Background noise.)

11 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: And if you can hear, that's
12 my three-minute timer, like I give everybody else.

13 (Laughter.)

14 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: But I am proud of this
15 agency. This agency is a lot better now. We're --
16 as the sign says, greatness is always preceded by
17 chaos. I think we're definitely in a great spot.
18 And I like to think that, over this nine and a half
19 years, I had something to do with it. And thank
20 you very much.

21 (Applause.)

22 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Commissioner Polmann.

23 COMMISSIONER POLMANN: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman. Your summary says what I wanted to
25 say. So, thank you. That allows me to be brief,

1 for once.

2 You -- you've been so tolerant of me. And
3 I -- I'll simply reflect on this being just the
4 best place to work. And it -- and it has
5 everything to do with the leadership that you've
6 been a great part of. And I -- I'm -- I'm so
7 pleased, looking back, to have had the opportunity
8 to second your nomination. And -- and I'm glad to
9 have had you as -- as Chairman.

10 The collegiality that this board enjoys has
11 everything to do with the type of leadership and
12 the organization that you've fostered. And we
13 benefited greatly, the organization has, this board
14 has, the efficiency that -- that you've helped us
15 achieve. And I'll simply say thank you.

16 I'll leave it at that. I appreciate your
17 serv- -- your public service is outstanding. And I
18 thank you very much for your service.

19 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thanks, Doc.

20 Commissioner Clark.

21 COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
22 I just wanted to add a couple of just very quick
23 accolades as well. I am also very glad to know
24 that the advertisement that was on the board was
25 not a reference to what was coming up; that was a

1 reference to something that had occurred in the
2 past. So, I'm very happy to hear that.

3 (Laughter.)

4 COMMISSIONER CLARK: I had the opportunity to
5 speak at a conference this weekend. And I -- I
6 took the opportunity to describe my fellow
7 Commissioners in what I would describe as a -- as a
8 football team.

9 And the -- the position that I chose to
10 describe our Chairman, I think, was probably one of
11 the most accurate you could have picked. I
12 described him as a hard-charging fullback. And
13 this is the guy that can block. This is the guy
14 that can carry the ball. This is probably the most
15 versatile person on the team.

16 And I just wanted to echo that again,
17 Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your leadership.
18 Thank you for being a mentor to me. And thank you
19 for keeping the spirit and the morale of this
20 organization where it is today. I -- we appreciate
21 that. We owe you a debt of gratitude for that.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN GRAHAM: Thank you.

24 Commissioner Fay.

25 COMMISSIONER FAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I

1 appreciate your leadership. I think the -- the
2 best thing to do in your honor is waive my time and
3 not talk about you and move on to the agenda.

4 Thank you.

5 (Laughter.)

6 (Whereupon, the ceremony was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, ANDREA KOMARIDIS WRAY, Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the same has been transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said proceedings.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED THIS 19th day of December, 2019.



ANDREA KOMARIDIS WRAY
NOTARY PUBLIC
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EXPIRES February 9, 2021