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Allegations raise questions about service on Boca Raton's advisory boards

June 25, 2011 | By Rebekah Monson, Sun Sentinel

BOCA RATON — City Council will review its guidelines for board service after Downtown Advisory Committee Chairman Glenn Gromann was asked to resign over an FTC investigation.

The City Council may review its requirements for board service after a call for the chairman of the Downtown [Boca Raton](#) Advisory Committee to resign.

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Bill Trinkka, a member of the committee, earlier this month asked Chairman Glenn Gromann to resign, citing Gromann's "personal problems" as a defendant in a Federal Trade Commission case.

The FTC alleges in a civil suit that Gromann's law firm offered fraudulent mortgage relief services to distressed homeowners.

"Essentially, the FTC says they defrauded these people who were desperate to stay in their homes," Trinkka said. "This guy's integrity is in the toilet, and him being on that board ruins the credibility of the board. I think board members should serve at the will of the council."

Gromann called Trinkka's allegations "nonsense," saying Trinkka launched a personal attack because of disagreements on the board about issues including growth, development and the barricades in Mizner Park.

"As a high-profile person, I am involved in lawsuits, and I have some motor vehicle infractions," he said. "None of that has anything whatsoever to do with my service on the committee."

Gromann, 51, is an attorney and real estate developer who has served on the Downtown Advisory Committee for four years and has lived in [Boca Raton](#) for 17 years. He pled guilty in 2010 to misdemeanor DUI, according to county court records. A charge of resisting a police officer was not prosecuted by the state, according to records.

The City Council appoints members of the Downtown Advisory Committee, which advises the city on matters related to downtown, including development, merchants' concerns, tourism and events.

[Palm Beach County's](#) new ethics guidelines do apply to board appointees, but not in situations like this. Instead, the rules are designed to prevent using public office for personal gain, said Alan Johnson, executive director of the county Ethics Commission.

"There's nothing in the ethics code that says you cannot serve if you're convicted of a crime that doesn't relate to your official duties," he said.

[Boca Raton's](#) rules on removing board and commission members hinge mostly on their attendance, and it's unclear whether ongoing legal action or discovery of a previous conviction are grounds for dismissal.

City Attorney Diana Grub Frieser is researching the issues, at the request of City Council members, and is expected to report to the council at its workshop meeting Monday afternoon.

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Applicants for [Boca Raton](#) advisory boards aren't asked to disclose previous convictions or current legal proceedings.

[Boynton Beach](#) commissioners on Tuesday rejected asking applicants to city advisory boards to disclose if they are the subject of a criminal investigation.

[Boynton Beach](#) now asks board applicants only if they've been convicted of a crime.

"Just on a go-forward basis, I think we should have some mechanism in there to at least assess a board member's representation of the community," Deputy Mayor Susan Haynie said.

Gromann, though, deserves due process, Councilman Mike Mullaugh said, and the FTC charges don't relate to his service on the committee.

"I don't think it sheds a positive light on the city," Councilman Anthony Majhess said. "Hopefully, Mr. Gromann gets everything cleared up in his personal life and with this case. Until then, it would be prudent for him to step down."

But, Gromann says, he will continue to serve on the committee to promote "smart growth" and development within [Boca Raton](#).

"With my last dying breath, I will stay and defend myself against this personal attack that has absolutely nothing to do with the work of the committee," he said.

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