

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2013-141 )

Wanda Y. Stringfellow, )  
Respondent. )

State Ethics Commission, )  
Complainant. )

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**CONSENT ORDER**

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This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission by virtue of a complaint filed by the Commission on June 13, 2013. The complaint against the Respondent, Wanda Y. Stringfellow, was considered by the Commission on September 18, 2013, and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing. Prior to the call of the case, Respondent agreed to entry of the following statement of facts, conclusions of law, discussion, admission, and disposition in this matter as follows:

**STATEMENTS OF FACT**

1. The Respondent, Wanda Y. Stringfellow, is currently serving as the Mayor of the Town of Chester.

2. A review of the minutes of the Chester Town Council meeting on December 10, 2012 indicate that a motion was made by Councilman King D. Thompson for the Town of Chester to provide a stipend to Respondent for performing the duties of town administrator dating back to October 15, 2012. The motion was passed with Councilman George W. Caldwell opposed. The stipend was determined to be \$500 per week. Respondent was not present at this Council meeting.

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3. Councilman Betty Bagley advised that during executive session of the December 12, 2012 council meeting she advised council that she thought that state law prevented a mayor from assuming the duties of the administrator; nevertheless, Ms. Bagley voted in favor of the stipend.

4. Councilman Caldwell stated that he voted against the motion to provide a stipend to Respondent based upon the statement made by Ms. Bagley in executive session. Caldwell stated he contacted the SC Municipal Association and received a copy of the law applicable to this matter. The law stated that a mayor or councilperson could not hold any other entity employment during their term of office. During the January 2013 Council meeting, while in executive session, Caldwell presented the relevant section of the law to the attention of Respondent, fellow councilmembers and the town attorney.

5. The Chester Town Attorney April Counterman advised that when she learned of the state law in question she instructed Respondent to cease performing the town administrator duties and cease receiving the stipend. Ms. Counterman stated that she sent an e-mail to the Chester Town Human Relations Director concerning the termination of Respondent's stipend. No record of said e-mail could be located.

6. Respondent advised that she did take over the duties of the city administrator on October 15, 2012 until council could locate and approve a qualified candidate to replace the departed administrator. She advised she never requested the stipend; however, she did accept the stipend when council approved it. When Respondent learned about the S.C. law that specifically prohibited her from serving as administrator she

assumed the city attorney was going to review the law and get back to Respondent. From January to June 2013 Respondent did not receive any information from the city attorney. She continued to receive the stipend.

7. Documents from the City of Chester payroll indicate that Respondent received \$19,500.00 in stipend payments from October 15, 2012 through June 21, 2013.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Based upon the Statement of Facts, the Commission concludes, as a matter of law:

1. During all times relevant, the Respondent, Wanda Y. Stringfellow, was a public official, as defined by S.C. Code Ann. § 8-13-100(25)(Supp. 2012).
2. The State Ethics Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.
3. Section 8-13-700(A) prohibits a public official from knowingly using his official employment to obtain any economic interest for himself.
4. Section 8-13-100(11)(A) defines “economic interest” as “an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a public official, public member, or public employee may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.”

### **DISCUSSION**

(Available to the Respondent to provide mitigating information.)

### **ADMISSIONS**

The Respondent, Wanda Y. Stringfellow, admits that she violated Section 8-13-700(A).

**DISPOSITION**

The State Ethics Commission hereby finds Wanda Y. Stringfellow in violation of Section 8-13-700(A), of the Ethics Reform Act and hereby adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Admissions, and Disposition as agreed upon by the Respondent.

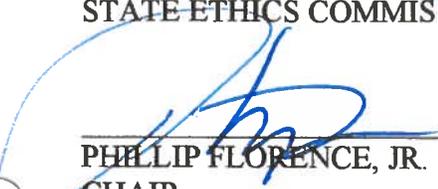
THEREFORE, the State Ethics Commission hereby issues this written warning to Wanda Y. Stringfellow for her violation of Section 8-13-700(A) of the Ethics Reform Act,

AND, orders Respondent to continue to reimburse the Town of Chester for those payments in violation of Section 8-13-700(A);

AND, orders Respondent to pay an administrative fee of \$500.00 within 30 days of receipt of the signed order,

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 15<sup>th</sup> DAY OF January, 2013

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

  
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PHILLIP FLORENCE, JR.  
CHAIR

  
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Wanda Y. Stringfellow