

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)

IN THE MATTER OF:)
COMPLAINT C2014-163)

Drew Laughlin,)
Respondent.)

Joseph DuBois,)
Complainant.)

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

DECISION AND ORDER

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COMMISSION

Pursuant to S. C. Code Ann. § 8-13-320(10)(i)(Supp. 2013), the State Ethics Commission reviewed the above captioned complaint on September 17, 2014 charging the Respondent, Drew Laughlin, with a violation of Section 8-13-700. Present at the meeting were Commission Members James H. Burns, Chair, Sandy Templeton, James I. Warren, III, Frank Grimbball, Julie S. Jeffords-Moose, Twana N. Burreis-Alcide, Thomas M. Galardi and Sherri A. Lydon. The following allegation was considered:

ALLEGATION

On June 16, 2014 the State Ethics Commission received a complaint from Joseph DuBois of Hilton Head, SC against Drew Laughlin, Mayor of Hilton Head, SC. The complaint alleged that on January 23, 2013 the Respondent appeared before the SC Real Estate Commission and gave sworn testimony as Mayor of Hilton Head while being paid by Coral Resorts, LLC in an effort to influence the Real Estate Commission.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Having carefully reviewed the evidence presented, the Commission finds as fact:

1. The Respondent, Drew Laughlin, is the part time Mayor of Hilton Head. He is also a self-employed attorney.

2. Dara Coleman, attorney for the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) advised she was in attendance at the Real Estate Commission meeting in question. She stated that Respondent testified in the hearing and did state during the hearing that he was employed as the Mayor of Hilton Head. She stated his testimony concerning Coral Resorts, LLC was brief and she does not believe he was formally representing Coral Resorts.

3. On July 2, 2014 Respondent stated he was represented by an attorney who would be in contact with the investigator.

4. On July 8, 2014 Desa Ballard, attorney for Respondent, advised that Respondent was not at the Real Estate Commission hearing in his official capacity as mayor. He was attending the hearing as a witness for Coral Resorts. Respondent billed Coral Resorts for his time and travel to Columbia for the hearing. Respondent did not submit any claim for travel expenses to the town of Hilton Head.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Respondent is a public official, as defined by Section 8-13-100(27).
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 position to obtain any economic interest for himself.

DECISION

THEREFORE, based upon evidence presented, the State Ethics Commission has determined that there is not probable cause to indicate that the Respondent, Drew Laughlin, violated Section 8-13-700(A), as the evidence in this matter indicates that he was simply stating his position as mayor when he testified before the SC Real Estate

Commission. There is no evidence indicating that Respondent was using his official position as mayor to obtain an economic interest for himself. The Commission has therefore dismissed the charges in accordance with Section 8-13-320(10)(i), and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 30th DAY OF September, 2014.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



JAMES H. BURNS
CHAIRMAN

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA