

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND ) BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2014-134 )

Barbara A. Hopkins, )  
Respondent. )

Frank Jones, )  
Complainant. )

**DECISION AND ORDER**

STATE ETHICS  
COMMISSION

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Pursuant to S. C. Code Ann. § 8-13-320(10)(i)(Supp. 2013), the State Ethics Commission reviewed the above captioned complaint on June 17, 2014 charging the Respondent, Barbara A. Hopkins, with violations of Section 8-13-700, etal. Present at the meeting were Commission Members James H. Burns, Chair, Clisby P. Templeton, James I. Warren, III, Regina H. Lewis, Julie S. Jeffords-Moose, Thomas Miller Galardi and Sherri A. Lydon. The following allegation was considered:

**ALLEGATION**

On March 14, 2014 the State Ethics Commission received a complaint filed by Frank Jones, of Sellers, SC against Barbara A. Hopkins, Mayor, Town of Sellers, SC. The complaint alleged that Larry Fiore, brother-in-law of the Respondent was observed delivering a load of hardwood lumber taken from Sellers Town Hall to the Respondent's residence. The old Sellers Town Hall was scheduled to be demolished by a contracting group prior to the date that the Respondent removed certain items from the old Town Hall. The complaint also stated that the Respondent's brother, Raleigh Singletary, demolished an old piano from the Sellers Community Center and demolished the Town of Sellers barn for metal. Singletary loaded the metal onto his personal truck.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. The Respondent, Barbara A. Hopkins, is the Mayor of the Town of Sellers.
2. The investigation revealed that Respondent did receive lumber from the Old Sellers Town Hall building; however, Respondent's economic interest was not distinct from the general public. A review of Sellers Town Council minutes revealed that lumber from the old town hall building was available to anyone in the community. In addition, there is no evidence to prove that the lumber that Respondent received resulted in an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more. A review of the town's financial records revealed the scrap metal material from the old town hall building was sold to a local company and the proceeds were deposited in to the town's general fund account.

#### **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 provides in part that a public official may not knowingly use his official office to obtain an economic interest for himself.
4. Section 8-13-100(11) provides that economic interests means an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transactions 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.

#### **DECISION**

THEREFORE, based upon evidence presented, the State Ethics Commission has determined that there is not probable cause to indicate that the Respondent, Barbara A.

Hopkins, violated Section 8-13-700. 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 20th DAY OF June, 2014.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



JAMES H. BURNS  
CHAIRMAN

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA