

# State of South Carolina

## State Ethics Commission

**CHILDS C. THRASHER, CHAIR**  
**DONALD GIST, VICE CHAIR**  
**BRIAN M. BARNWELL**  
**SAMUEL L. ERWIN**



**DON JACKSON**  
**VICTOR K. LI**  
**BRANDOLYN THOMAS PINKSTON**  
**ASHLEIGH R. WILSON**

**201 EXECUTIVE CENTER DRIVE, SUITE 150**  
**COLUMBIA, S.C. 29210**

**MEGHAN L. WALKER**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### MINUTES

#### COMMISSION MEETING

#### OPEN SESSION

**September 19, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 9:42 a.m. by Acting Chair Donald Gist at the State Ethics Commission's Hearing Room located at 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina. Commission members present were Brian Barnwell, Samuel L. Erwin, Don Jackson, and Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston. Commissioner Ashleigh R. Wilson had an excused absence from the meeting but would be joining in by phone. Chair Childs Thrasher and Commissioner Vic Li had excused absences for this meeting.

Staff present: Ami Franklin, Jimmy Bagnall, Rynne Caldwell, Kevin Hinson, Courtney Laster, Reggie Gaymon, Richard Provencher, Kristin Nabors, Susan Bickley, Deaven Linen, and Karen A. Wiggins.

Others present: Linda G. Blackmon.

Acting Chair Gist declared a quorum present and recognized Deputy Director Ami Franklin. Mrs. Franklin noted there were no changes in today's agenda and stated for the record that the news media was duly notified.

### MINUTES

Acting Chair Gist called for approval of the Minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Erwin, seconded by Commissioner Barnwell, to accept the Minutes. Acting Chair Gist asked for any discussion or opposition. There being none, the motion carried with no opposition to approve the Open Session Minutes and the Executive Session Minutes from the July 18, 2019 Commission meeting. The motion carried unanimously with a 5 - 0 vote.

## **MOTION**

### **C2016-088 State Ethics Commission vs. Linda S. Woods**

Acting Chair Gist called this matter. General Counsel Courtney Laster directed everyone to their yellow folder for additional material on this matter and stated that this was a joint motion and order put together by her, the staff, and Respondent's attorney. Ms. Laster further stated that the reason for the motion and order was to allow the parties to engage in discovery. Discussion ensued concerning the timeframe to get this done. Ms. Laster said she would work on a scheduling order. Acting Chair Gist asked for further discussion or a motion. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnwell, seconded by Commissioner Erwin, to grant a motion for discovery. The motion carried with a 5 – 0 vote.

## **OFFICE OPERATIONS**

### **2018-2019/2019-2020 Budget Report, Compliance Report, and Pending and Paid Orders Report**

Mrs. Franklin directed everyone to their yellow folder for the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 Budget reports and the July and August Compliance reports. Discussion ensued concerning the adoption of the Senate Oversight Committee's report. Mrs. Franklin then presented the Pending and Paid Orders report. Acting Chair Gist asked for further discussion or a motion. A motion was made by Commissioner Pinkston, seconded by Commissioner Erwin, to accept Mrs. Franklin's presentation of the reports as information. The motion carried with a 5 – 0 vote.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 9:54 a.m. Acting Chair Gist asked for further discussion or a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing probable cause matters. A motion was made by Commissioner Jackson, seconded by Commissioner Erwin, to go into Executive Session. There being no discussion or opposition, the motion carried with a 5 – 0 vote.

## **RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon return from Executive Session at 10:19 a.m., Commissioner Wilson exited the meeting via telephone. A motion was made by Commissioner Pinkston, seconded by Commissioner Barnwell, to adopt and ratify actions taken on probable cause matters in Executive Session. There being no discussion or opposition, the motion carried with a 5 – 0 vote.

Mrs. Franklin noted that each commissioner received at today's meeting a new cover for their tablets. Commissioner Pinkston thanked Investigator Hinson for the training session she received concerning her new tablet.

**POINT OF ORDER**

**Appeal**

**C2018-019 Francis Bell vs. Linda Blackmon-Brace**

Acting Chair Gist called this matter. Ms. Laster gave a history of events, noting that the Respondent was present to present her written appeal for consideration at today's meeting. Ms. Laster further stated that the matter was not on the agenda because the requested written appeal had not been received, and the Freedom of Information Act requires a 24-hour notice to be put on the agenda. Acting Chair Gist called the Respondent forward, noting that there was some confusion, but the Commission would show no prejudice today and would discuss this matter without taking any action. Respondent agreed to communicate with Director Walker and Ms. Laster in preparing and presenting a written appeal by September 30, 2019. Staff will contact Respondent to schedule a date for the appeal's consideration at the January, 2020, commission meeting. Commissioner Jackson asked Respondent for the record to give staff a good mailing address, e-mail, and telephone number. Respondent complied and then asked to pass out some material. Acting Chair Gist objected to any documents being passed out concerning the appeal. Acting Chair Gist asked for any further discussion in this matter. There being none, Acting Chair Gist moved on to further business.

Acting Chair Gist asked for any other matters to be taken up. Staff reviewed the agenda for the cases to be heard in the afternoon. Discussion ensued concerning the number of cases on the agenda, the availability to use facetime, and the required witnesses that needed to be heard.

Acting Chair Gist gave special thanks to all the staff for their hard work and the diligent and professional manner in which the staff carries out the activities of the State Ethics Commission.

Commissioner Jackson thanked Ms. Laster for the Roberts Rules on Motions "cheat sheet", and all agreed to make it a permanent part of the meeting book. Commissioner Jackson asked when the material for the meetings would be deleted from the tablets. Staff responded 30 days. Acting Chair Gist asked for a 2-day alert notice to charge the tablets when they receive the meeting books. Karen Wiggins said she would make the alert calls after she sends the material.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Acting Chair Gist asked for further discussion or a motion. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnwell, seconded by Commissioner Jackson, to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 a.m. The motion carried with a 5 – 0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,



Karen A. Wiggins