

State of South Carolina

State Ethics Commission

SCOTT E. FRICK, CHAIRMAN
F. XAVIER STARKES, VICE
CHAIRMAN
BRYANT S. CALDWELL
AJ HOLLOWAY



BRANDOLYN THOMAS PINKSTON
MARY HUNTER B. TOMLINSON
NEAL D. TRUSLOW
MATTHEW N. TYLER

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

MEGHAN WALKER DAYSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MINUTES

COMMISSION MEETING

OPEN SESSION

March 21, 2024

The March 21, 2024, meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m. by Chairman Scott E. Frick at the State Ethics Commission's Hearing Room located at 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina. Chairman Scott E. Frick, Vice Chairman F. Xavier Starkes, Commissioner Neal D. Truslow, Commissioner Mary Hunter B. Tomlinson, and Commissioner Matthew N. Tyler were in attendance. Commissioner AJ Holloway, Commissioner Brandolyn T. Pinkston, and Commissioner Bryant Caldwell appeared via Zoom call.

Staff present: Meghan Walker Dayson, Ami Franklin, Courtney Laster, Renique Brabham, Ryanne Caldwell, Kevin Hinson, Reggie Gaymon, James Bagnall, W.B. White, Jr., Rachael O'Bryan, and Erin Caughman were in attendance.

Chairman Frick declared a quorum present. Attorney Laster noted for the record that the news media was duly notified.

MINUTES

Chairman Frick called for the approval of the January 18, 2024 minutes. Chairman Frick asked for any discussion. A motion was made by Commissioner Starkes, seconded by Commissioner Tyler, to accept the minutes from the January 18, 2024 Commission meeting. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

OFFICE OPERATIONS

Director Dayson presented the Budget, Compliance Report, and Pending and Paid Orders Report for information.

MOTIONS

C2021-016 Kim Benson vs. Ken Loveless – Motion to Admit Additional Evidence and Motion to Stay Proceedings

Commissioners Frick, Starkes, and Holloway recused from the Motions hearing since they served on the Hearing Panel. Commissioner Truslow served as Chair. Commissioner Truslow disclosed that he had a prior professional relationship with Respondent's counsel and felt he could be impartial and fair, but wanted to ensure for the record there was no objection to him serving on the Appellate Panel. Neither Commission staff nor Respondent's counsel had an objection. The Commission was represented by Courtney Laster, and Respondent was represented by Desa Ballard and Haley Hubbard. Following arguments related to the Motions, Commissioner Truslow gave Attorney Laster and Respondent's counsel sixty days to each submit a proposed Order.

APPEALS

C2022-085 State Ethics Commission vs. Morgan B. Reeves

Attorney Laster read a request from Respondent to continue the Appellate Hearing to the next full meeting due to Respondent's medical status that morning. There was no objection, and the request was granted to move the Appellate Hearing to May 16, 2024.

C2022-041 State Ethics Commission vs. Phillip O. Gunter

The bailiff called for Respondent at the call of the case, but Respondent was not present. Attorney Laster entered into the record an exhibit showing that Respondent was hand delivered notice of the Appellate Hearing and asked that the Appellate Panel uphold the Hearing Panel's Decision. A motion was made by Commissioner Tyler, seconded by Commissioner Starkes that the Hearing Panel's Decision be affirmed. The motion passed with a 5 – 0 vote, with Commissioners Truslow, Tomlinson, and Pinkston recused from the vote since they comprised the Hearing Panel.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Frick asked for further discussion or a motion to go into Executive Session to hear probable cause matters. A motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Starkes to go into executive session to hear probable cause matters. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commissioners returned from Executive Session at 12:58 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Frick asked for further discussion or a motion to adjourn. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Pinkston, to adjourn at 1:00 p.m. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachael O'Bryan

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