

# *State of South Carolina*

## *State Ethics Commission*

**F. XAVIER STARKES, CHAIRMAN**  
**NEAL D. TRUSLOW, VICE**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**BRYANT S. CALDWELL**



**MARY HUNTER B. TOMLINSON**  
**MATTHEW N. TYLER**

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

**MEGHAN WALKER DAYSON**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### **MINUTES**

### **COMMISSION MEETING**

### **OPEN SESSION**

### **March 20, 2025**

The March 20, 2025, meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman F. Xavier Starkes at the State Ethics Commission's Hearing Room located at 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina. Chairman F. Xavier Starkes and Commissioner Scott E. Frick were in attendance. Commissioner Matthew N. Tyler, Commissioner Mary Hunter B. Tomlinson, Commissioner Bryant Caldwell, Commissioner Brandolyn T. Pinkston, and Commissioner AJ Holloway appeared via Zoom call. Vice Chairman Neal D. Truslow joined by phone shortly after the meeting commenced.

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

Chairman Starkes declared a quorum present. Director Dayson noted for the record that the news media was duly notified.

### **Motion to Dismiss**

C2020-028 Alberta Wasden vs. Jerald Sanders

A motion to dismiss the Jerald Sanders complaint was filed by Attorney Laster on January 27, 2025. Attorney Laster provided the basis of the motion was that following the filing of the complaint, the Commission found probable cause to find that Respondent violated the Ethics Act by writing unauthorized Town checks to his private foundation and referred the matter to the Attorney General's (AG) office. On December 30, 2024, the AG's Office notified the Commission that Respondent had successfully completed a Pre-Trial Intervention Program (PTI) and had reimbursed the Town for monies misspent. Given that this matter has been resolved through the

AG's office, a motion was made by Commissioner Tyler, seconded by Commissioners Caldwell and Hunter to dismiss the complaint given that Respondent successfully completed PTI and reimbursed the Town. The motion passed 7 – 0 vote, with Commissioner Truslow not present to vote.

## **APPEALS**

C2022-060 State Ethics Commission vs. William C. Smith

The Commission was represented by Attorney Laster and the Respondent and his attorney, Maureen Coffey, appeared virtually. Commissioner Starkes presided as the Appellate Chair. Respondent did not dispute that he violated the Ethics Act but was requesting a reduction of penalties, asserting that he had difficulties keeping up with the filing requirements due to other events related to his public service. Respondent also stated that he did not have the financial means to pay the penalty assessed. Commissioner Starkes stated that the matter would be taken under advisement and an order issued within a few weeks. Commissioners Pinkston, Tomlinson, and Truslow recused from the appellate hearing since they comprised the Hearing Panel.

A break was taken for the Appellate Panel to deliberate on the Smith appellate hearing.

## **MINUTES**

Chairman Starkes called for the approval of the January 16, 2025 minutes. Chairman Starkes asked for any discussion. A motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Tyler, to accept the minutes from the January 16, 2025 Commission meeting. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

## **OFFICE OPERATIONS**

Director Dayson thanked Commissioner Holloway, Commissioner Pinkston, and Commissioner Frick for their service as Commissioners, as this was their last meeting before their terms expired. Commissioners Holloway, Pinkston, and Frick all expressed thanks and appreciation to the other Commissioners and Commission staff.

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

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Starkes asked for further discussion or a motion to go into Executive Session to hear probable cause matters, receive an update on a personnel matter, and receive legal advice. A motion was made by Commissioner Frick, seconded by Commissioner Pinkston, to go into executive session to hear probable cause matters, receive an update on a personnel matter, and receive legal advice. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

**RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Commissioners returned from Executive Session at 11:31 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Starkes asked for further discussion or a motion to adjourn. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Frick, seconded by Commissioner Holloway, to adjourn at 11:32 p.m. The motion carried with an 8 – 0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachael O'Bryan

Rachael O'Bryan