

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

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FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:

CASE NUMBER

C 2022-180

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: Tom Hutto

RESPONDENT: Jim Reno

ADDRESS: 1820 Sharonwood Ln. Rock Hill, SC 29732

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 803-517-2411

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

TITLE:

TITLE: Council Member

Set forth in detail specific facts upon which you based your complaint against above-named respondent (only detailed, clear factual allegations will be considered. If additional space is needed, attach supplemental sheets).

See attachment.

If there is a finding of probable cause, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response (if any) by respondent, and the notice of hearing. If a hearing is to be held, the final order and all exhibits become public record. If no hearing is held following a finding of probable cause, the final disposition of the matter becomes public record.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF YORK

Personally appeared before me Tom Hutto who, first being duly sworn, says that he/she has read and knows the contents of the above complaint and that the allegations contained therein, are true and correct to the best of his/her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those he/she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this

17 day of Sept, 22

[Redacted Signature]

Complainant Signature

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission expires

July 5 2028

Caitlin Fewell

Notary Public, State of South Carolina

My Commission Expires July 5, 2028

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

REPLY TO: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210 (803)253-4192

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Attachment to Complaint

- 1) Council Member Reno addressed Zoning Board of Appeals. This board is seated by the City Council.

ZBA Minutes 10-2018 10/16/18: Jim Reno, [REDACTED] addressed the Board. Mr. Reno went over the key aspects of turning an accessory structure into an accessory dwelling unit, and the inability of the request to make the required findings of fact for the variance based on his assessment of them. Mr. Reno also brought up the legal doctrine of unclean hands, which means that when someone comes seeking relief but that things they have done put themselves in that position, they are not entitled to that relief. Mr. Sturgis asked Mr. Reno to clarify whether he was in opposition to or in support of the request. Mr. Reno stated that he was in opposition. Mr. Sturgis for further assessment from Mr. Reno. Mr. Reno explained his thoughts about why the situation was not unique and how the accessory dwelling unit use does not fit the character of the neighborhood. He added that he did not want to start a precedent of turning accessory structures in the neighborhood into accessory dwelling units. (Pg 8)

- 2) J. Reno does not have complete SEI forms filed for 2021, 2020, 2019, or 2018. On his forms he only ever lists his income from the city, not any income from his job at PNC financial services (2018-2021) or First Citizens Bank (2021-present). He also never reports any income for his spouse, Mellissa, from her job at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF RICHLAND) BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
))
IN THE MATTER OF:)
COMPLAINT C2022-130)
))
Tom Hutto,) **DECISION AND ORDER**
Complainant.)
))
Jim Reno,)
Respondent.)
_____)

This matter came before the South Carolina Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on October 18, 2022. The Commission’s Executive Director reviewed the Complaint, determined it contained facts sufficient to warrant an investigation, and ordered an investigation. On November 21, 2024, the Commission reviewed the Complaint and investigative findings to determine whether probable cause existed to charge Jim Reno (Respondent) with violating the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act). For the reasons stated herein, the Commission finds probable cause exists, but waives further proceedings on the matter.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

1. Respondent has served on the Rock Hill City Council since 2006.
2. Respondent timely filed his Statements of Economic Interests (SEI) in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, but failed to properly disclose sources of income therein.
3. On October 16, 2018, Respondent appeared before the City’s Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to speak in opposition to a zoning request for property located near his personal residence.
4. The Complaint alleged Respondent’s appearance before the City ZBA was improper because City Council appoints the members of the ZBA. The Complaint further alleged Respondent had failed to properly disclose his sources of income on his SEIs from 2019-2022.

5. On November 8, 2022, Respondent amended his 2019-2022 SEIs to properly disclose his sources of income.

LAW

Pursuant to Section 8-13-320, the Commission is empowered to receive complaints and conduct investigations related to violations of the Ethics Act. Following the receipt of a Complaint and completion of a corresponding investigation, the Commission must determine whether there is probable cause to believe a violation of the Ethics Act occurred. Section 8-13-320(10)(i). If the Commission determines probable cause exists, it may order a hearing on the merits or, if the Respondent has taken action to remedy or correct the alleged violation, it may waive further proceedings. Section 8-13-320(10)(i). The decision to waive further proceedings lies within the sound discretion of the Commission.

Section 8-13-740(A)(5) prohibits municipal public officials from knowingly representing a person before any subunit of the municipality for which the public official has official responsibility. However, pursuant to Section 8-13-740(A)(7)(c), such representation is permitted when it relates to a public official's personal affairs or the personal affairs of a public official's family member. Section 8-13-1120 of the Ethics Act requires public officials to disclose sources of governmental and private income on their SEIs.

DECISION

As an initial matter, the Commission finds that probable cause does not exist to believe Respondent violated Section 8-13-740 of the Ethics Act given that the property was located close to the Respondent's personal residence. The Commission therefore finds that the exception to the representation found in Section 8-13-740(A)(7)(c) applies.

However, based on evidence presented, the Commission hereby determines there is

probable cause to believe that Respondent violated Section 8-13-1120 of the Ethics Act by failing to properly disclose his sources of income on his SEIs from 2019-2022. Nonetheless, since the Respondent has now properly amended his SEIs to properly disclose said income, the Commission hereby waives further proceedings pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the Ethics Act.

THEREFORE, pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i), and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder, the Commission hereby waives further proceedings.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 14th DAY OF January, 2024.

SOUTH CAROLINA ETHICS COMMISSION



SCOTT E. FRICK, CHAIR

Columbia, South Carolina