

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:
CASE NUMBER
C 2023-031

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: State Ethics Commission
ADDRESS: 201 Executive Center Drive
Suite 150
Columbia, SC 29210
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (803) 253-4192

RESPONDENT: Thomas Dease, Jr.
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Candidate – Town of Swansea Council

Section 8-13-1308, S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires candidates to file Campaign Disclosures within ten (10) days of receiving or expending \$500; fifteen (15) days prior to each election; within ten (10) days of the end of each quarter; and a final report when the campaign account is closed. In addition, certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain the total of contributions accepted, the name and address of each person making a contribution, the total expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate or committee, and the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made from campaign funds. Pursuant to Section 8-13-1362 and Regulation 52-504 (C), the Pre-Election and quarterly report are required even when there have been no contributions or expenditures.

Records of the State Ethics Commission indicate that a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure was due between October 13, 2021 and October 18, 2021.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirement by letters dated March 28, 2022 and July 12, 2022 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure has not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1308(A), Section 8-13-1308(D)(1), and Section 8-13-1308 (F), S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended.

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 Richland

Personally appeared before me Meghan L. Walker who, first being duly sworn, says that 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 her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 3rd day of March, 2023

[REDACTED]
Meghan L. Walker, Executive Director

[REDACTED]
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission expires 01/22/26

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

REPLY TO: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210 (803)253-4192
ELECTRONIC COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

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| STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA |) | |
| COUNTY OF RICHLAND |) | BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION |
| |) | |
| IN THE MATTER OF: |) | |
| |) | |
| Complaint C2023-031 |) | |
| |) | |
| State Ethics Commission |) | NOTICE OF HEARING |
| Complainant. |) | |
| |) | |
| Thomas Dease, Jr. |) | |
| Respondent. |) | |
| |) | |

The State Ethics Commission has determined that there is probable cause pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, in the above-captioned complaint. The Commission will convene a formal hearing into the matter in accordance with Section 8-13-320(10)(i) & (j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.) on Thursday, August 15, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. at the Commission Hearing Room located at: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210.

The following allegation will be heard:

COUNT ONE
FAILURE TO FILE A PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT
SECTION 8-13-1308(A) S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Thomas Dease, Jr., Candidate for Swansea Town Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2021 Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(A).

You have the right to be represented by counsel, the right to call and examine witnesses, the right to introduce exhibits, and the right to cross-examine opposing witnesses. This hearing will be open to the public as required by Section 8-13-320(10)(j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended. The procedures to be followed are set forth in the Administrative Procedures

Act, Section 1-23-10, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, the State Ethics Act, Section 8-13-100, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.).

A pre-hearing conference may be scheduled prior to the hearing to allow exchange of witness lists and evidence, marking of exhibits, and disposition of motions or pleadings. In the event you fail to appear, judgment by default will be rendered against you. If there are any questions concerning the above notice or hearing times, please contact the State Ethics Commission.



Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director
State Ethics Commission

Dated this 16th day,
of November 2023.

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on the RESPONDENT Thomas Dease, Jr., 125 Glencrest Drive, Gaston, SC 29053 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 27th day of November 2023, by **CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant

State Ethics Commission

(803) 253-4192

Columbia, South Carolina

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
 COUNTY OF RICHLAND)
)
 IN THE MATTER OF:)
 COMPLAINT C2023-031)
)
 State Ethics Commission,)
 Complainant,)
)
 Thomas Dease, Jr.,)
 Respondent.)
 _____)

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

CONSENT ORDER

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on March 6, 2023. Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against Thomas Dease, Jr. (Respondent) was considered by the Commission and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing. Prior to the call of the case, Respondent agreed to the following:

STATEMENTS OF FACT

1. Respondent was a candidate for Swansea Town Council in a November 2, 2021 election.
2. Respondent did not file a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) prior to the election.
3. In a March 28, 2022 certified letter, the Commission notified Respondent of his failure to file a Pre-Election CDR.
4. According to the United States Postal Service, the certified letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on April 4, 2022 at 12:15 p.m. Though the return receipt does not appear to contain Respondent's signature, Respondent called and left a message with the Commission regarding the penalty letter.
5. On April 11, 2022, after speaking with Commission staff, Respondent appealed the late-filing penalty. At the time of the appeal, Respondent had not filed his 2021 Pre-Election CDR. The Commission notified Respondent that his appeal was denied via first-class mail dated July 12, 2022.

6. On April 14, 2022, penalties begin accruing at \$10.00 per day.
7. On April 24, 2022, penalties begin accruing at \$100.00 per day.
8. Following the filing of the Complaint, the Commission's investigation revealed that Respondent had no contributions or expenditures.
9. On September 15, 2023, following multiple contacts from Commission staff to assist him with coming into compliance, Respondent filed his Pre-Election CDR and is now in compliance.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based upon the Statements of Fact, the Commission concludes, as a matter of law:

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a candidate pursuant to Section 8-13-1300(4). Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.
2. Section 8-13-1308(A) provides, in relevant part:

. . . a candidate who does not receive or expend campaign contributions totaling an accumulated aggregate of five hundred dollars or more must file an initial certified campaign report fifteen days before an election.
3. Section 8-13-1510(A) provides, in relevant part:

. . . a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report . . . must be assessed a civil penalty as follows: (1) a fine of one hundred dollars if the statement or report is not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter; and (2) after notice has been given by certified or registered mail that a required statement or report has not been filed, a fine of ten dollars per calendar day for the first ten days after notice has been given, and one hundred dollars for each additional calendar day in which the required statement or report is not filed, not exceeding five thousand dollars.
4. Section 8-13-130 allows the Commission to "levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is in violation" of the Ethics Act.

DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of violating Section 8-13-1308(A) for failing to timely file a 2021 Pre-Election CDR. Through this Consent Order, Respondent admits he failed to timely file the 2021 Pre-Election CDR. In mitigation, Respondent states

this was his first run for office and that he was confused with the filing requirements. Additionally, Respondent stated that he believed he had already submitted the Pre-Election CDR prior to receiving notice from the Commission. Further, the Commission acknowledges that the Respondent raised no contributions and made no expenditures except for a \$25.00 filing fee.

DISPOSITION

1. The Commission finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(A).
2. The Commission adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Discussion, and Disposition as agreed upon by the Respondent.

THEREFORE, the Commission hereby issues a Public Reprimand, and orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within nine (9) months from receipt of this Order, a reduced late-filing penalty of \$450.00 and an administrative fee of \$500.00, for a total of \$950.00.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that he is not only admitting to a violation of the Ethics Act, but also confessing to a judgment of \$950.00 in the event he does not make payment as provided for in this Order, in which case the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent with the County Clerk of Court in Respondent's last known County of residence, who shall enter this Order in the amount of \$950.00 (less any money paid) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

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

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION


SCOTT E. FRICK, CHAIR


THOMAS DEASE, JR.
RESPONDENT