

# STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:**  
**CASE NUMBER**  
C 2023-113

## COMPLAINT FORM

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

**RESPONDENT:** William H. Griste, Jr.  
**ADDRESS:** [REDACTED]  
**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** [REDACTED]  
**TITLE:** Candidate – North Myrtle Beach 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 Campaign Disclosure was due no later than October 10, 2019, January 10, 2020, April 10, 2020, July 10, 2020, October 10, 2020, January 10, 2021, April 10, 2021, July 10, 2021, October 10, 2021, January 10, 2022, April 10, 2022, July 10, 2022, October 10, 2022, January 10, 2023, April 10, 2023, and July 10, 2023. Respondent was sent an email reminder thirty days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline from July 10, 2020 through October 2021 and was sent an email reminder thirty days before and ten days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline after October 2021.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirements by a certified letter dated April 7, 2023 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Quarter 3 2019, Quarter 4 2019, Quarter 1 2020, Quarter 2 2020, Quarter 3 2020, Quarter 4 2020, Quarter 1 2021, Quarter 2 2021, Quarter 3 2021, Quarter 4 2021, Quarter 1 2022, Quarter 2 2022, Quarter 3 2022, Quarter 4 2022, Quarter 1 2023, and Quarter 2 2023 Campaign Disclosure have not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B) 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 Walker Dayson 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 14<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2023

[REDACTED]  
Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director

[REDACTED]  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission expires 01/02/26

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 )  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
Complaint C2023-113 )  
State Ethics Commission )  
Complainant. )  
William H. Griste, Jr. )  
Respondent. )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

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, June 20, 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 allegations will be heard:

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

That William H. Griste, Jr., Candidate for North Myrtle Beach Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2019 Quarter 3 Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR), in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That William H. Griste, Jr., Candidate for North Myrtle Beach Council, did in Richland

County, fail to file a 2019 Quarter 4 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That William H. Griste, Jr., Candidate for North Myrtle Beach Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2020 Quarter 1 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).


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

That William H. Griste, Jr., Candidate for North Myrtle Beach Council, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2020 Quarter 2 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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.).

**[THIS SPACE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]**

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.

  
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Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director  
State Ethics Commission

Dated this 16<sup>th</sup> 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 William H. Griste, Jr., P.O. Box 154, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29597 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 C2023-113 )  
State Ethics Commission, )  
Complainant, )  
William H. Griste, 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 September 14, 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 William H. Griste, 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 an unsuccessful candidate for North Myrtle Beach City Council in a November 7, 2017 election.
2. Prior to the filing of the Complaint, Respondent's most recently filed Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) was a 2019 Quarter 1 CDR filed on April 6, 2019 showing a balance of \$35.90 in on-hand contributions. Respondent thereafter failed to file any quarterly CDRs.
3. In an April 7, 2023 certified letter, the Commission notified Respondent of his failure to timely file any additional CDRs.
4. According to the United States Postal Service (USPS), the certified letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on April 20, 2023 at 3:53 p.m.
5. On April 21, 2023, Commission staff returned a call to Respondent and left a voicemail detailing the appeal process and how to file a Final CDR. Staff spoke with Respondent later that day and updated his email address.

6. On April 28, 2023, Commission staff helped Respondent migrate his account to the new system. Staff also contacted the filing system vendor for assistance regarding an issue with Respondent's balance.
7. On April 30, 2023, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$10.00 per day per CDR.
8. On May 10, 2023, late-filing penalties began to accrue at \$100.00 per day per CDR.
9. On June 2, 2023, the filing system vendor informed Commission staff that the system issue could not be resolved until Respondent updated his in-kind expenditures in his filed reports.
10. On June 8, 2023 and July 8 2023, Commission staff attempted to contact Respondent and left voicemails.
11. On August 3, 2023, Respondent spoke with Commission staff, who instructed him to file amendments to his account so the filing system vendor could correct his balance.
12. On September 11, 2023, Commission staff attempted to contact Respondent and left a voicemail.
13. Following the filing of the Complaint, the Commission investigation revealed Respondent's campaign bank account reached a zero balance on April 27, 2020.
14. On October 16, 2023, the filing system vendor corrected the system issue, and Commission staff assisted Respondent with reconciling his campaign account.
15. On October 31, 2023, Respondent filed his 2019 Quarter 3 CDR, 2019 Quarter 4 CDR, 2020 Quarter 1 CDR, and 2020 Quarter 2 CDR and is now in compliance.<sup>1</sup>

#### **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.

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<sup>1</sup>Respondent's 2019 Quarter 2 CDR was system-generated with a submission date of June 30, 2019. This missing CDR is being handled through the standard noncompliance process.

2. Section 8-13-1308(B) provides, in relevant part:

Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made, whether before or after an election until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8-13-1370.

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 four (4) counts of violating 8-13-1308(B) for failing to timely file CDRs for 2019 Quarter 3 through 2020 Quarter 2. Through this Consent Order, Respondent admits he violated the Ethics Act as described herein. In mitigation, Respondent asserts that he stopped filing when his campaign bank account was closed after reaching a zero balance because he believed his filing duties had ended. Respondent further asserts he got confused when he reviewed his account in the Commission’s filing system because it was different from what he originally reported. Finally, Respondent states he owned a restaurant that went out of business in 2020 due to COVID, and he had to get heart stints and a pacemaker which caused communication to be less consistent. The Commission acknowledges that Respondent encountered difficulties with his filings that required intervention from the Commission’s filing system vendor.

**DISPOSITION**

1. The Commission finds Respondent in violation of four (4) counts of 8-13-1308(B).
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 this Public Reprimand and orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within one (1) year from receipt of this Order, a reduced late-filing penalty of \$300.00 and an administrative fee of \$400.00, for a total of \$700.00. The Commission declines to assess any accrued late-filing penalties.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that he is confessing to a judgment of \$700.00 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 \$700.00 (less any money paid) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 17<sup>th</sup> DAY OF May 2024.



WILLIAM H. GRISTE  
RESPONDENT

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



SCOTT E. FRICK, CHAIR