

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:

CASE NUMBER

C 2074-035

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: State Ethics Commission

ADDRESS: 201 Executive Center Drive

Suite 120

Columbia, SC 29210

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 803-253-4192

TITLE:

RESPONDENT: Charlene M. Washington Parker

ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

TITLE: Former Wagner Town Clerk

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).

Pursuant to a confidential investigation, a Commission Investigator subpoenaed account records for the Town of Wagner. Upon review of the account records, the Commission Investigator observed checks written from the Town's account to Charlene M. Washington Parker and signed by Charlene M. Washington Parker, a public employee at the time issued and the former clerk for the Town of Wagner.

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 Dayson Walker 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

5th day of June, 2025

[REDACTED]

Meghan Dayson Walker, Executive Director

[REDACTED]

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission expires 01/21/26

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 C2024-035 |) | |
| |) | |
| State Ethics Commission |) | NOTICE OF HEARING |
| Complainant. |) | |
| |) | |
| Charlene Washington-Parker |) | |
| 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 21, 2025 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
USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST
SECTION 8-13-700(B), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED

That Charlene Washington-Parker, former Clerk for Town of Wagener, did in Richland County, use her official position to obtain an economic interest by signing checks from Town account 0034 to herself in 2020, in violation of Section 8-13-700(B).

COUNT TWO
USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST
SECTION 8-13-700(B), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED

That Charlene Washington-Parker, former Clerk for Town of Wagener, did in Richland

County, use her official position to obtain an economic interest by signing checks from Town account 0034 to herself in 2021, in violation of Section 8-13-700(B).

COUNT THREE
USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST
SECTION 8-13-700(B), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED

That Charlene Washington-Parker, former Clerk for Town of Wagener, did in Richland County, use her official position to obtain an economic interest by signing checks from Town account 0069 to herself in 2020, in violation of Section 8-13-700(B).

COUNT FOUR
USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST
SECTION 8-13-700(B), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED

That Charlene Washington-Parker, former Clerk for Town of Wagener, did in Richland County, use her official position to obtain an economic interest by signing checks from Town account 0069 to herself in 2021, in violation of Section 8-13-700(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.).

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.

Dated this 20th day,
of March 2025.



Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director
State Ethics Commission

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on Respondent Charlene M. Washington-Parker, 239 Glendale Road, Williston, SC 29853 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 20th day of March 2025, 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

Columbia, South Carolina

(803) 253-4192

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)
IN THE MATTER OF:)
COMPLAINT C2024-035)
State Ethics Commission,)
Complainant,)
Charlene Washington-Parker,)
Respondent.)

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

CONSENT ORDER

This matter comes before the South Carolina State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a complaint filed on June 5, 2024.¹ Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against Charlene Washington-Parker (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 employed with the Town of Wagener (Town) from 2013 until her resignation in 2022. Respondent served as the town clerk from 2019 through 2022.
2. From 2020-2022,² Respondent was one (1) of two (2) signatures on forty-nine (49) Town checks made payable to herself. These checks were drawn on two (2) different Town bank accounts and were paid to Respondent for compensation and expense reimbursements.
3. The Commission's investigation revealed that it is common practice within the Town for individuals to be one (1) of two (2) required signatures on checks written to themselves.

¹ The Commission initially uncovered evidence of the violations discussed herein during an investigation into a separate Complaint matter related to the Town of Wagener.

² The Commission's statute of limitations is four (4) years pursuant to Section 8-13-320(9)(d).

JX #1

4. The Commission's investigation did not reveal any evidence that Respondent received more money than she was owed.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a public employee, as defined by Section 8-13-100(25).

The Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

2. Section 8-13-700(B) provides, in relevant part:

No [public employee] may make, participate in making, or in any way attempt to use his [employment] to influence a governmental decision in which he, a family member, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated has an economic interest. A [public employee] who, in the discharge of his official responsibilities, is required to take an action or make a decision which affects an economic interest of himself, a family member, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated shall:

- (1) prepare a written statement describing the matter requiring action or decisions and the nature of his potential conflict of interest with respect to the action or decision;

...

- (3) if he is a public employee, he shall furnish a copy of the statement to his superior, if any, who shall assign the matter to another employee who does not have a potential conflict of interest. If he has no immediate superior, he shall take the action prescribed by the State Ethics Commission;

3. Section 8-13-100(11)(a) defines "economic interest," in relevant part, as:

... an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a [public employee] may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.

4. Section 8-13-130 allows the Commission to "levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is in violation of any provision of the Ethics Act."
5. Section 8-13-320(10)(l)(i) allows the Commission to require payment of a civil penalty of up

JX #2

to two thousand dollars for each violation of the Ethics Act.

DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with four (4) counts of violating Section 8-13-700(B) for signing Town checks made payable to herself.³ Through this Consent Order, Respondent acknowledges she violated the Ethics Act in each instance outlined in the Notice of Hearing. In mitigation, Respondent states she was unaware that the Ethics Act prohibited her from signing checks to herself when the money was properly owed. Respondent further states, and the Commission has confirmed, that it has been common practice in the Town for employees and officials to sign off on their own properly owed payments. The Commission again emphasizes that Respondent did not receive any economic benefit to which she was not entitled.

DISPOSITION

1. The Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of Section 8-13-700(B) as outlined in the Notice of Hearing.
2. The Commission hereby 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 to Respondent for violations of the Ethics Act;

AND orders Respondent to pay to the Commission, within six (6) months from receipt of this Order, an administrative fee of \$300.00. The Commission declines to assess any civil penalties in light of the mitigation described herein.

³ The Notice of Hearing contains one (1) violation per year, per bank account, in which Respondent signed checks made payable to herself, for a total of four (4) counts.

JWA # 3

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that she is not only admitting to violations of the Act, but also confessing to a judgment of \$300.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in the event she does not make full and timely payment or action as provided in this Order. In that event, the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent in the County of Respondent's last known residence. Upon said filing, the Clerk of Court shall enter this Order in the amount of \$300.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS ORDERED THIS 17th DAY OF June, 2025.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



CHARLENE WASHINGTON-PARKER
RESPONDENT

