

State of South Carolina

State Ethics Commission

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



SARA PARRISH
MARY HUNTER B. TOMLINSON
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MEGHAN WALKER DAYSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MINUTES

COMMISSION MEETING

OPEN SESSION

January 15, 2026

The January 15, 2026 meeting was called to order at 9:33 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, Vice Chairman Neal D. Truslow, and Commissioner Helen Munnerlyn were in attendance. Commissioner Sara Parrish, Commissioner Mary Hunter B. Tomlinson, and Commissioner Bryant Caldwell appeared via Zoom. Commissioner Matthew N. Tyler was absent from the meeting.

Staff present: Meghan Walker Dayson, Ami Franklin, Courtney Laster, Kevin Hinson, Rynne Caldwell, Reggie Gaymon, W.B. White, Jr., Timothy J. Plunkett, Kristin Nabors, and Reneda Ellerbe, were in attendance.

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

APPEALS

C2022-102 State Ethics Commission vs. Bahaadur Abd'ul'Ahad

At the call of the case, Attorney Laster made a Motion that Respondent's appeal be dismissed, and asked the Appellate Panel to affirm the Hearing Panel's Decision and Order given that Respondent did not appear for the Appeal Hearing after being personally served with the Notice of Appellate Hearing. Attorney Laster further provided that her Motion was also based on the fact that Respondent was informed that he could attend the Appellate Hearing virtually and that he had already been granted two continuances for the Appellate Hearing. The Motion was granted with a 6 – 0 vote.

MINUTES

Chairman Starkes called for the approval of the November 20, 2025 minutes. Chairman Starkes asked for any discussion. A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to accept the minutes from the November 20, 2025 Commission meeting. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

OFFICE OPERATIONS

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Starkes asked for any further discussion or a motion to go into Executive Session to receive legal advice regarding S.C. Code Ann. 17-5-140 & S.C. Code Ann. 8-13-715 and to hear probable cause matters. A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to go into Executive Session for the purposes stated. The motion carried with a 6–0 vote.

RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Commissioners returned from Executive Session at 10:57 a.m. Chairman Starkes noted for the record that no votes, other than those allowed by statute, were taken in executive session.

ACTION ITEMS

The Commissioners were presented with a draft of SEC AO2026-001, which address whether a county coroner is subject to the Ethics Reform Act during any actions taken with regard to Child Fatality Funds disbursed under S.C. Code Ann. § 17-5-140. A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to adopt the draft of SEC AO2026-001, as written. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

Following the approval of SEC AO2026-001, Attorney Laster informed the Commissioners while recently reviewing Commission formal advisory opinions, Commission staff noted the existence of six formal advisory opinions issued between 1991-1995 that are based on a version of Section 8-13-715 that no longer exists. Based on this discovery, staff believes the opinions should be withdrawn in their entirety or partially. Staff requested Commission advisory opinions SEC AO92-51 and SEC AO92-057 be withdrawn entirely effective January 15, 2026. Staff then requested that Commission advisory opinions SEC AO92-054, SEC AO92-100, SEC AO92-063, and SEC 94-005 be partially withdrawn effective January 15, 2026, to the extent they prohibit public employees from accepting direct expense reimbursement for speaking engagements under Section 8-13-715

Commission Starkes then called for individual motions regarding staff requests.

A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to completely withdraw SEC AO92-051, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to completely withdraw SEC AO92-057, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to partially withdraw SEC AO92-054, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Munnerlyn, to partially withdraw SEC AO92-063, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Munnerlyn, to partially withdraw SEC AO92-100, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

A motion was made by Commissioner Truslow, seconded by Commissioner Munnerlyn, to partially withdraw SEC AO94-00, as recommended by staff. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Munnerlyn, seconded by Commissioner Truslow, to adjourn at 11:13 a.m. The motion carried with a 6 – 0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachael O'Bryan