

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:
CASE NUMBER
c 2023-084

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: Ricky Burke
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Council member Central Pacolet

RESPONDENT: Buddy Harrelson
ADDRESS: Town of Central Pacolet
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Mayor of Central Pacolet

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).

This letter is from some of the Council members of Central Pacolet in requesting your assistance in investigating our mayor Buddy Harrelson Jr. It seems that he is like a Dictator what he says goes he controls the checkbook no one gets to see it however we have a copy of a check that he used to pay delinquency taxes we didn't know we had to pay taxes. He does not cooperate with the council, He seems it his way or no way, He's not doing anything for the town. We're sending you a copy of a letter that he published reference one of the council members saying she was fired an she's an elected official he said he can hire and fire her.(Copy of letter). We have recordings of him saying he is in charge and that's the way it is. We haven't seen where he is listed with the Department of Ethics. Maj Robertson, our hands are tied will you please help us? He has put up flags and charged the town fifty dollars. He has done other projects in which he pays himself. He does not allow us to look at the check book or verify any expenses since 2019.

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 Spartanburg

Personally appeared before me Ricky Burke 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 15 day of JUNE 2023

[REDACTED]
Complainant Signature

[REDACTED]

Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission expires February 27, 2024

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

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)	
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)	BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
)	
)	
IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
Complaint C2023-084)	
)	
)	
Ricky Burke)	NOTICE OF HEARING
Complainant.)	
)	
Dewey "Buddy" Harrelson)	
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 State Ethics Commission will, therefore, convene a formal hearing into the matters, 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, February 20, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at the State Ethics 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 FOR FINANCIAL GAIN
SECTION 8-13-700(A), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Dewey "Buddy" Harrelson, Mayor of Central Pacolet, signing a Town of Central Pacolet check in the amount of \$1,198.14 to himself to reimbursement himself for purchases made for the Town, in violation of Section 8-13-700(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 22nd day,
of July 2024.

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on RESPONDENT Dewey "Buddy" Harrelson, 140 Holly Street, Pacolet, SC 29372 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 29th day of July 2024, 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)

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF:)
COMPLAINT C2023-084)

Ricky Burke,)
Complainant,)

CONSENT ORDER

Dewey Harrelson, JR.)
Respondent.)

This matter comes before the South Carolina State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a complaint filed on June 7, 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 Dewey Harrelson (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 has served as Mayor for the Town of Central Pacolet (Town) since 2010. His official duties include, in relevant part, making administrative decisions regarding the day-to-day operations of the Town.
2. On April 17, 2023, Respondent purchased, for the Town, a computer, related software, technical support services, and copy services from Office Max in the amount of \$1,198.14. Respondent used his personal MasterCard to cover the purchase.
3. The Commission's investigation revealed that, on April 18, 2023, Respondent signed a check from the Town to himself in the amount of \$1,198.14.

JR #1

4. The Commission's investigation further revealed that the Town did not have a debit card, that Office Max would not accept a Town check as payment, and that Respondent was the only person with signatory authority for the Town's checking account.

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 official, as defined by Section 8-13-100(27).

Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

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

No public official ... may knowingly use his official office ... to obtain an economic interest for himself ... This prohibition does not extend to the incidental use of public materials, personnel, or equipment, subject to or available for a public official's, public member's, or public employee's use that does not result in additional public expense.

3. 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."
4. Section 8-13-320(10)(1)(i) allows the Commission to require payment of a civil penalty of up to two thousand dollars for each violation of the Ethics Act.
5. Section 8-13-780 allows the Commission to impose an oral or written warning or reprimand.

DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of violating Section 8-13-700(A) for signing a check payable to himself. Through this Consent Order, Respondent acknowledges he violated the Ethics Act when he authorized his own reimbursement check. In mitigation, Respondent states that he was unaware that he could not reimburse himself for Town purchases. He additionally asserts that he has not used Town funds to pay himself for his official duties. Specifically, he states that he intended to cover the purchase from Office Max with a check from

JG#J

the Town but was informed at checkout that the store could not accept the check to cover the full purchase. The Commission acknowledges that Respondent provided receipts from Office Max outlining the purchases he made on behalf of the Town for the same amount that he reimbursed to himself. Further, the Respondent asserts that he now understands his mistake and has obtained a Town credit card that is secured by two (2) people in the Town and has adjusted the Town's checking account to allow for two (2) signatories on Town checks. Finally, Respondent asserts that a monetary penalty would pose a significant hardship on him because he does not accept payment from the Town for his services as Mayor, has significant health issues, and relies on social security and disability to cover his personal expenses.

DISPOSITION

1. The Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of violating Section 8-13-700(A).¹
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 a Public Reprimand and orders the Respondent to pay the Commission, within six (6) months from receipt of this Order, an administrative fee of \$400.00. Due to Respondent's mitigation herein, the Commission declines to assess a civil penalty.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that he is not only admitting to violations of the Ethics Act, but also confessing to a judgment of \$400.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in the event he does not make full and timely payment as provided for in this Order. In that event, the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent in the Clerk of Court's Office in

¹ The Complaint also alleged that Respondent improperly used Town funds by signing a Town check to pay a tax lien to the South Carolina Department of Revenue in May of 2017. However, the Commission is bound by the four (4) year statute of limitations set forth in Section 8-13-320(9)(d). Accordingly, no actions beyond June 7, 2019 are considered herein.

JH #3

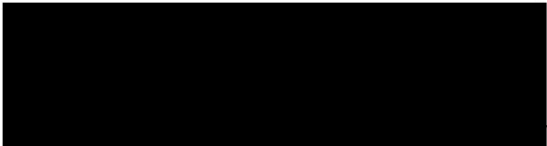
the County of Respondent's last known residence. Upon said filing, the Clerk of Court shall enter this Order in the amount of \$400.00 less any money paid to the Commission) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS ORDERED THIS 23rd DAY OF January, 2025 

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



F. XAVIER STARKES, CHAIR



DEWEY HARRELSON JR
RESPONDENT

12/18/2024