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Rev. 11/2025

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
201 Executive Center Drive
Suite 150
Columbia, SC 29210
ETHICS ACT COMPLAINT FORM

Section 1. READ BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM:

Investigative Authority: The Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (the Act) gives the State Ethics Commission (Commission) the authority to investigate complaints against candidates, public officials, public members, public employees, at the state or local government level in South Carolina as well as lobbyists, and lobbyist's principals.

The Commission has the authority to investigate violations of Title 8, Chapter 13 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 2, Chapter 17 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 59, Chapter 150 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, various provisions of Title 42, Chapter 3 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, and various provisions of Title 58, Chapter 3 of the South Carolina Code of Laws

Statute of Limitations: Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(9)(d) of the Act, the Commission cannot take action on a complaint more than four years after the violation is alleged to have occurred.

Blackout Period: Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(9)(b)(1) of the Act, no complaint may be accepted against a candidate for elective office during the fifty-day period before an election in which he is a candidate.

Please note that the Commission does not have the jurisdiction to investigate alleged violations of South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act, violations of the criminal code, instances of rude or discourteous treatment, federal officials, or violations of local ordinances, policies, or procedures.

Section 2. PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT:

Complaints must be submitted by mailing the original of a fully completed complaint form to the Commission at 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, SC 29210. Failing to completely fill out the complaint form will result in the form being returned to you without an investigation being opened. Complaint forms must be either typed or written in clear, legible handwriting.

Both the Complainant and the Respondent have the right to be represented by legal counsel of their choosing. If either the complainant and/or the respondent chooses to be represented by legal counsel, they do so at their own expense.

Section 3. CONFIDENTIALITY:

Complaint forms become public documents if the Commission finds probable cause that a violation of law has occurred. Please note that upon receiving a properly filed complaint form, the Commission will share an unredacted copy of the complaint with the Respondent whether or not an investigation is ordered.

Section 4. COMPLAINT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Please check each circle to acknowledge that you have read and understand the following:

- ☒ I understand that I may be called to testify in an administrative or criminal proceeding should probable cause be found on this matter.
- ☒ I understand that I may be subpoenaed to sit for a deposition where I will be required to answer questions under oath.
- ☒ I understand that my name, address, and phone number will be shared with the Respondent.
- ☒ I understand that my name may be made public by the Respondent or the Commission.

Section 5. CHECK THE POSITION OF THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED:

- ☐ Candidate for public office
- ☒ Elected official at the state or local level
- ☐ Employee of local or state government
- ☐ Lobbyist
- ☐ Lobbyist's Principal
- ☐ Member of South Carolina Legislature
- ☐ Public member (a person appointed to a part-time board, commission, or council at the state or local level)

Section 6. COMPLAINANT AND RESPONDENT INFORMATION:

I. PERSON BRINGING THE COMPLAINT (COMPLAINANT)			
Name:	State Ethics Commission		
Address:	201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150		
City:	Columbia	State: SC	Zip Code: 29210
Telephone	(803) 253-4192	Email Address:	
II. PERSON AGAINST WHOM COMPLAINT IS BROUGHT (RESPONDENT)			
Name:	Abbott M. Shelley		
Address:	[REDACTED]		
City:	Latta	State: SC	Zip Code: 29565
Telephone	[REDACTED]		

Section 7. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS COMPLAINT COMES FROM:

- ☒ Personal knowledge
- ☐ Media Reports
- ☐ From a third-party
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Please specify: _____

Section 8: STATEMENT OF FACTS (Please state the actions of the Respondent upon which your ethics complaint is based):

Section 8-13-1140, SC Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires the filing of an updated Statement of Economic Interests for the previous calendar year annually thereafter prior to March 30. Records in the State Ethics Commission indicate that the Respondent was required to file the 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 Statement of Economic Interests as a Town of Latta Councilman.

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 an accumulated aggregate of \$500.00 or more; 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 between November 15, 2023 and November 20, 2023 for the December 5, 2023 election.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirements by a certified letter dated April 3, 2025 as described in the attached. In addition, an email reminder was sent ten days and thirty days prior to the Statement of Economic Interests deadlines. To date, a Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 Statement of Economic Interests have not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1140, Section 8-13-1308(A), and Section 8-13-1308(D)(1), SC Code Ann., 1976, as amended.

Section 9. VERIFICATION BY OATH OR AFFIRMATION - ORIGINAL NOTARY AND SIGNATURES REQUIRED:

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF RICHLAND

Personally appeared before me Meghan Walker Dayson who, first being duly sworn, says that he 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 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
29th day of December, 2025


Meghan Walker Dayson
Executive Director


Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission expires 01/22/26

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)
IN THE MATTER OF:)
Complaint C2025-111)
State Ethics Commission)
Complainant.)
Abbott M. Shelley)
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, August 20, 2026, 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 PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT
SECTION 8-13-1308 (A), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Abbott M. Shelley, candidate for the Town of Latta Council, failed to file a 2023 Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(A).

COUNT TWO
FAILURE TO FILE STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS
SECTION 8-13-1140, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Abbott M. Shelley, councilmember for the Town of Latta Council, failed to file a 2022 Statement of Economic Interests on or before March 30, 2022, in violation of Section 8-13-

1140.

COUNT THREE
FAILURE TO FILE STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS
SECTION 8-13-1140, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Abbott M. Shelley, councilmember for the Town of Latta Council, failed to file a 2023 Statement of Economic Interests on or before March 30, 2023, in violation of Section 8-13-1140.

COUNT FOUR
FAILURE TO FILE STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS
SECTION 8-13-1140, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Abbott M. Shelley, councilmember for the Town of Latta Council, failed to file a 2024 Statement of Economic Interests on or before March 30, 2024, in violation of Section 8-13-1140.

COUNT FIVE
FAILURE TO FILE STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS
SECTION 8-13-1140, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Abbott M. Shelley, councilmember for the Town of Latta Council, failed to file a 2025 Statement of Economic Interests on or before March 30, 2025, in violation of Section 8-13-1140.

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.

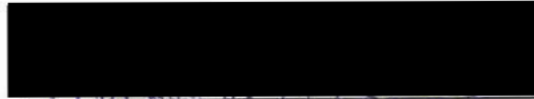
A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Executive Director.

Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director
State Ethics Commission

Dated this 21st day,
of May 2026

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on RESPONDENT Abbott M. Shelley, 106 Highland Drive, Latta, SC 29565 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 22 day of May 2026, by CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



Maquita S. Kessler, Paralegal
State Ethics Commission

Columbia, South Carolina

(803) 253-4192

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF RICHLAND

IN THE MATTER OF:
Complaint 2025-111

State Ethics Commission,
Complainant.

Abbott M. Shelley,
Respondent.

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

DECISION AND ORDER

Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 (Ethics Act), the Commission reviewed the above-captioned Complaint against Abbott M. Shelley (Respondent) and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing. Present at the hearing on August 20, 2026 were Commissioners Helen Munnerlyn, Mary Hunter B. Tomlinson, and F. Xavier Starkes, Hearing Panel Chair. Respondent appeared *pro se* via Zoom and the Commission was represented by Jordan C. Davis. The following charges were considered: one count of Section 8-13-1308(A) for failing to file a 2023 Pre-Election Campaign Disclosure Report (PECD), and four counts of Section 8-13-1140 for failing to file a statement of economic interests (SEI) in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Having carefully reviewed the evidence presented, the Panel finds as fact:

1. Respondent has served as a councilmember for the Town of Latta since 2010. Respondent was most recently re-elected to this position on December 5, 2023.
2. Respondent did not file any Campaign Disclosure Reports (CDRs) for the 2023 election cycle, including the required PECD, which was due between November 15 and 20, 2023.
3. Respondent did not file any SEIs in 2022, 2023, 2024 or 2025.

SV#1

4. On April 3, 2025, Commission staff sent a letter by certified mail notifying Respondent of his failure to file the 2023 PECD and 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 SEIs.
5. According to the United States Postal Service, this letter was delivered to Respondent's address of record on April 7, 2025. The signature on the return receipt was illegible.
6. On October 27, 2025, Commission staff reached Respondent by phone and explained the deficiencies in his filings. Respondent stated he would contact the Town for assistance.
7. The Complaint was sent by certified mail, with return receipt requested, to Respondent's address of record on December 29, 2025. This mailing was returned to the Commission on December 31, 2025. Commission Investigator Timothy Plunkett contacted Respondent by telephone on January 14, 2026. Respondent denied having received the Complaint and requested that it be re-sent to him via first-class mail. Respondent could not recall receiving the Commission's April 2025 certified letter. Respondent further advised that his only campaign expense for the 2023 election was a \$35.00 filing fee. Respondent stated he did not open a campaign bank account and that he was given campaign signs by a supporter.
8. When asked about his SEIs, Respondent stated he received a \$900.00 annual salary from the Town and that he had no private sources of income.
9. After their conversation, Investigator Plunkett sent the Complaint to Respondent by both first-class mail and email. Respondent confirmed receipt of the Complaint on January 28, 2026.
10. On February 13 and 26, March 5 and 11, and April 21 and 22, 2026, Investigator Plunkett and/or Enforcement Administrator Erin Caughman contacted Respondent by phone. On each occasion, Respondent stated an individual was assisting him with the filings. Respondent declined to share that individual's name or contact information with Investigator Plunkett.

JA #2

11. During the Panel hearing, Respondent testified that he lives on a fixed income of Social Security benefits and receives \$900.00 per year for his service on Town Council. Steven Bradley Coward, the Assistant Town Administrator, also testified on behalf of Respondent, stating that he and Respondent made several failed attempts to access Respondent's account on the Commission's filing website. Coward also stated that Respondent could not remember his email address or passcode, so Coward coordinated with a previous employee of the Town who used to submit filings for Respondent.
12. Coward stated that he and Respondent were not able to retrieve the necessary information from the former employee to log Respondent into the filing system. Coward stated they made multiple unsuccessful attempts to contact the former employee.
13. Respondent came into compliance with the assistance of Coward and Commission staff on August 19, 2026, the day prior to the Panel hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

1. Respondent was a candidate, as defined by Section 8-13-1300(4), and a public official, as defined by Section 8-13-100(28). Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.
2. As a candidate, Respondent failed to file a 2023 Pre-Election CDR before the December 5, 2023 election, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(D)(1), which provides, in relevant part:

At least fifteen days before an election, a certified campaign report must be filed showing contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures to or by the candidate [] for the period ending twenty days before the election. The candidate [] must maintain a current list during the period before the election commencing at the beginning of the calendar quarter of the election

JSX #3

of all contributions of more than one hundred dollars and expenditures.

3. As a public official, Respondent failed to file SEIs in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, in violation of Section 8-13-1140, which provides, in relevant part:

A person required to file a statement of economic interests under this chapter annually shall file, pursuant to Section 8-13-365, an updated statement for the previous calendar year, no later than noon on March thirtieth of each calendar year.

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 8-13-1510 allows the Commission to assess late filing penalties as follows:

A person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report or fails to file a required statement or report must be assessed a civil penalty as follows...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 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 is 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.

DECISION

Section 8-13-1308(A) of the Ethics Act requires all candidates to file a PECD prior to each election. Additionally, Section 8-13-1140 of the Ethics Act requires all elected officials to file an SEI on or before March 30 of each year. Here, the evidence presented to the Hearing Panel established that Respondent participated in the December 5, 2023 election, but did not file a PECD prior to that election. Respondent also held office and was required to file SEIs annually in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. Respondent failed to file any of these reports until one day prior to his hearing. Evidence also showed Respondent received certified notice of these violations as recently

JA # 4

as January 28, 2026. Therefore, Respondent has accrued the maximum amount of late-filing penalties for each report.

In mitigation, Respondent testified he has limited technological capabilities, and that he has previously received assistance from other Town employees in filing. Respondent also testified as to his limited income and small annual stipend for the performance of his council duties. On Respondent's behalf, Coward testified Respondent is a very active member of the Town Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Panel has determined, based on a preponderance of the evidence, that Respondent is in violation of one count of Section 8-13-1308(A) and four counts of Section 8-13-1140.

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 one year of receipt of this Order, a late filing penalty of \$500.00 for the 2023 PECD and \$100.00 per SEI, and an administrative fee of \$1,100.00, for a total of \$2,000.00.

AND, pursuant to Section 8-13-320 of the Ethics Act, if the \$2,000.00 is not paid in full within one year from Respondent's receipt of this Order, the total amount owed shall revert to the maximum possible assessment of \$26,100.00 (late-filing penalties of \$5,000.00 per report, and an administrative penalty of \$1,100.00) and the Commission shall enter a judgment against Respondent in the amount of \$26,100.00 with the Clerk of Court in the county of Respondent's last known residence. In that event, the Clerk of Court shall enter this Order in the amount of \$26,100.00 in its judgment rolls, without cost to the Commission.

FINALLY, Respondent has ten (10) days from receipt of this Order to appeal this Decision and Order to the full Commission.

AK #5

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 8th DAY OF September, 2026.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION


F. XAVIER STARKES, HEARING CHAIR

Columbia, South Carolina