

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:
CASE NUMBER

c 2025-081

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: Rita J. Weaver
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Retired, Folly Beach resident

RESPONDENT: Ann Peets
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Candidate, Mayor of Folly Beach

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).

In 2023, Ann Peets ran for Folly Beach City Council, but her SC Ethics account still is not closed. It appears she did not file any reports during all of 2024, or Q1 and Q2 of 2025, including a final report showing a zero balance, as required by state law.

There is a remaining balance of \$4,066.91 in personal loans, and there is no record of her making a signed statement to SCEC showing this personal loan had been forgiven, as state law requires to zero out an account.

Peets is currently appealing her losing lawsuit against the SCEC after they found probable cause to investigate over 40 other campaign finance violations during her 2023 campaign.

On Aug. 22, 2025, Peets filed to run for Mayor of Folly Beach while these other violations are still pending due to her lawsuit. Peets has not opened a new SCEC account for the 2025 race, and her 2023 reporting still hasn't been updated after being notified about her first round of ethics complaints.

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 Charleston

Personally appeared before me Rita J. Weaver 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
26th day of August, 2025

[REDACTED]
Complainant Signature

[REDACTED]
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission expires 3-11-2029

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 C2025-081	)	
	)	
Rita J. Weaver,	)	NOTICE OF HEARING
Complainant.	)	
	)	
Ann Peets,	)	
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, June 18, 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 A CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT
SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to timely file a Quarter 1 2024 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 Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 2 2024 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 Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 3 2024 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 Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 4 2024 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 1 2025 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 2 2025 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 3 2025 CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

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

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to file a Quarter 4 2025

CDR, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

COUNT NINE
FAILURE TO FILE A TIMELY DEPOSIT CAMPAIGN CONTRIBTUION
SECTION 8-13-1312, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to timely deposit a September 25, 2025 contribution from Tiina Vaska in the amount of \$50.00, in violation of Section 8-13-1312.

COUNT TEN
FAILURE TO FILE MAINTAIN RECORDS
SECTION 8-13-1302, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to maintain invoices, receipts, or bills for expenditures related to her November 4, 2025, election cycle, in violation of Section 8-13-1302.

COUNT ELEVEN
FAILURE TO DISCLOSE CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE
SECTION 8-13-1308(F), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Ann Peets, candidate for Folly Beach City Council, failed to disclose an expenditure to Vistaprint in the amount of \$40.36, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F).

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 14th day,
of March 2026.

Certificate of Service by Certified Mail

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on RESPONDENT Ann Peets P.O. Box 1193, Folly Beach, SC 29439 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 23 day of March 2026, by CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.


Erin Caughman

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 C2025-081	)	
	)	
Rita J. Weaver,	)	DECISION AND ORDER
Complainant.	)	
	)	
Ann Peets,	)	
Respondent.	)	
_____	)	

Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 (Ethics Act), the South Carolina Ethics Commission (Commission) reviewed the above-captioned Complaint against Ann Peets (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* and the Commission was represented by Jordan C. Davis. The following charges were considered: seven (7) counts of Section 8-13-1308(B) for failing to file seven (7) quarterly Campaign Disclosure Reports (CDRs) from Quarter 2 2024 through Quarter 4 2025; one (1) count of Section 8-13-1312 for failing to timely deposit a campaign contribution; one (1) count of 8-13-1302 for failing to maintain records related to campaign expenditures; and one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(F) for failing to properly disclose a campaign expenditure.¹

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

¹ The Notice of Hearing contained an additional count for Respondent's failure to file a Quarter 1 2024 CDR in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B). At the call of the case, Commission staff moved to dismiss this count (Count 1) because it was previously charged in a separate complaint matter that remains pending before the Commission. The Panel granted Commission staff's motion and the case proceeded on the remaining counts.



1. Respondent was a candidate for Folly Beach City (City) Council in a November 7, 2023 election (Council Campaign) and a candidate for Mayor of the City in a November 4, 2025 election (Mayoral Campaign).
2. Prior to the initiation of the Complaint, Respondent's most recently filed CDR was Quarter 4 2023 CDR filed in conjunction with Respondent's Council Campaign. Therein, Respondent disclosed zero on-hand contributions and a personal loan balance of \$4,066.91.
3. On August 27, 2025, Respondent filed the following CDRs: Quarter 1 2024, Quarter 2 2024, Quarter 3 2024, Quarter 4 2024, Quarter 1 2025, and Quarter 2 2025. In each CDR, Respondent carried a personal loan balance of \$4,066.91.
4. On August 29, 2025, the Commission received the Complaint, which alleged that (1) Respondent failed to file additional quarterly CDRs in conjunction with her Council Campaign, despite carrying a loan balance² and (2) Respondent failed to open "a new [Commission] account for the [Mayoral Campaign]." Respondent confirmed receipt of the Complaint via email on October 10, 2025.
5. During the Commission's investigation, Commission Investigator William White obtained and reviewed Respondent's Mayoral Campaign bank account records.³ Investigator White subsequently compared these campaign bank account records to Respondent's CDRs and discovered the following with regard to Respondent's Mayoral Campaign:
 - a. Respondent timely filed an Initial CDR on September 6, 2025, a Pre-Election

² As stated in paragraph two (2), Respondent filed the CDRs from Quarter 1 2024 through Quarter 2 2025 on August 27, 2025, which appears to have been between the Complainant's mailing of the Complaint and the Commission's receipt of the Complaint.

³ Investigator White did not obtain campaign bank account records from Respondent's Council Campaign and instead relied on Respondent's certified CDRs which indicated that she had zero contributions on hand but still carried a personal loan balance.

SLH #2

CDR/Quarter 3 2025 CDR on October 15, 2025, and a Quarter 4 2025 CDR on January 9, 2026.

- b. Respondent disclosed that she raised a total of \$3,150.00 consisting of \$3,100.00 in personal contributions and one (1) \$50.00 from Tiina Vaska. Respondent's CDRs also reflected personal loans totaling \$2,025.00.
 - c. Respondent's CDRs indicated that she received the \$50.00 contribution from Vaska on September 25, 2025. However, Respondent's campaign bank account records revealed Respondent did not deposit this contribution until November 7, 2025.
 - d. Respondent's CDR reflected the following expenditures to Vistaprint: (1) \$88.59 on August 29, 2025; (2) \$93.54 on August 29, 2025; and (3) \$148.76 on September 8, 2025. However, Respondent's campaign bank account records revealed only two (2) expenditures to Vistaprint: (1) \$222.48 on August 29, 2025; and (2) \$148.76 on September 8, 2025 - a discrepancy of \$40.35.
6. On December 17, 2025, Investigator White emailed Respondent and requested "invoices, receipts, or bills for expenditures made during [the Mayoral Campaign]." Respondent did not produce the requested documents.
7. On March 23, 2026, a Notice of Hearing (NOH) was issued to Respondent. In addition to the counts related to the allegations of the Complaint, the NOH identified Respondent's failure to file CDRs for Quarter 3 2025 and Quarter 4 of 2025 for the Council Campaign; the failure to timely deposit the Vaska contribution; the failure to maintain invoices, receipts, and bills for the Mayoral Campaign; and the failure to properly disclose an expenditure to Vistaprint.
8. According to the United States Postal Service, Respondent received the NOH on April 3, 2026. Respondent confirmed receipt of the NOH by email on May 19, 2026.

JX # 3

9. On August 5, 2026, Respondent filed a Quarter 1 2026 CDR and a Quarter 2 2026 CDR in conjunction with her Mayoral Campaign. Respondent also amended her Pre-Election/Quarter 3 2025 CDR to correctly disclose the expenditures to Vistaprint. Each of these CDRs reflected an outstanding personal loan balance of \$2,025.00.
10. On August 15, 2026, Respondent filed a Quarter 3 2025 CDR, a Quarter 4 2025 CDR, a Quarter 1 2026 CDR, and a Quarter 2 2026 CDR, all in conjunction with her Council Campaign. Each of these CDRs reflected an outstanding personal loan balance of \$4,066.91.
11. At the hearing on August 20, 2026, Investigator White testified regarding his findings as described above, as well as his communications with Respondent. Investigator White also testified that the administrative costs associated with the Complaint totaled \$2,000.00.
12. Respondent testified on her own behalf during the August 20, 2026 hearing. Specifically, Respondent testified that she was advised by her attorney not to continue filing until a separate Complaint pending before the Commission was resolved. As to her Mayoral Campaign, Respondent testified that she did not timely deposit Vaska's contribution because she had a very busy election season and did not have the opportunity to go to the bank. Respondent also added that there was some confusion amongst bank staff as to how checks to campaigns could be written and to which accounts they could be deposited. Additionally, Respondent testified that the Vistaprint discrepancy was an oversight and noted that she corrected the filing upon conversation with Commission staff.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a candidate as defined by Section 8-13-1300(4). Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

JA #4

2. Respondent failed to maintain records of expenditures for her Mayoral Campaign, in violation of Section 8-13-1302, which reads, in relevant part:

A candidate [] must maintain and preserve an account of...the total amount of expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate []; the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made including the date, amount, purpose, and beneficiary of the expenditure [and]; all receipted bills, canceled checks, or other proof of payment for each expenditure.

3. Respondent failed to timely file the following quarterly CDRs in conjunction with her Council Campaign: Quarter 2 2024, Quarter 3 2024, Quarter 4 2024, Quarter 1 2025, Quarter 2 2025, Quarter 3 2025, and Quarter 4 2025, despite carrying a loan balance,⁴ in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B), which reads, 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.

4. Respondent failed to properly disclose the aforementioned expenditures to Vistaprint, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F), which reads, in relevant part:

Certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain...the total amount of expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate [and] the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made from campaign funds, including the date, amount, purpose, and beneficiary of the expenditure.

5. Respondent failed to timely deposit the Vaska contribution, in violation of Section 8-13-1312, which reads, in relevant part:

All contributions received by the candidate [] must be deposited in the campaign account by the candidate [] within ten days after

⁴ The Commission notes that Respondent's most recently filed CDRs for both campaigns still reflect a personal loan balance. Pursuant to Section 8-13-1308(B), Respondent is required to continue filing quarterly CDRs until she has closed her campaign bank accounts and has no outstanding debts.

3/18/25 #5

receipt.

6. 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.
7. Section 8-13-320(10)(l) allows the Commission to assess a \$2,000.00 civil penalty for each violation of the Ethics Act.
8. 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 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.

DECISION

Section 8-13-1308(B) of the Ethics Act requires candidates to continue filing quarterly CDRs until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement. See also Reg. 52-504(D) (“a candidate or committee must continue to file [CDRs] until the candidate or committee no longer accepts contributions, incurs expenditures, or pays for expenditures incurred”); Reg. 52-504(D)(3) (“A Final [CDR] may only be filed when there are no further contributions being solicited or made, there are no outstanding obligations, and the account balance is zero.”). In the present matter, Respondent failed to timely file seven (7) CDRs from Quarter 2 2024 through Quarter 4 2025, despite carrying a personal loan balance.

Section 8-13-1308(F) requires candidates to disclose specific information within their CDRs regarding campaign expenditures, including the total amount spent. Here, Respondent’s campaign bank account records revealed Respondent failed to properly account for \$40.35 paid to

JX #6

Vistaprint on August 29, 2025 within her CDRs.

Section 8-13-1312 requires candidates to deposit all contributions received within ten (10) days from receipt. Here, Respondent received a contribution from Tiina Vaska on September 25, 2025. Respondent was therefore required to deposit this contribution into her campaign bank account by October 5, 2025. However, she did not do so until November 7, 2025.

Section 8-13-1302 requires candidates to maintain records of campaign contributions and expenditures for a period of four (4) years. "These records shall be made available to the Commission upon request without charge." Reg. 52-201(D). Here, Respondent failed to provide invoices, receipts, or bills for her Mayoral Campaign as requested by Commission staff.

Section 8-13-1510(A)(1) imposes a \$100.00 late-filing penalty for each late-filed CDR. Section 8-13-1510(A)(2) imposes additional late-filing penalties after a Respondent has received notice of their failure to file each CDR. Here, Respondent received notice of her failure to file the aforementioned CDRs by way of the Complaint, which she received on October 10, 2025 and by way of the Notice of Hearing, which she received on April 3, 2026. Thus, Respondent has accrued \$10,500.00 in late-filing penalties as follows:

CDR	Date Due	Date Filed	Date of Notice	Late-Filing Penalty
Quarter 2 2024	July 10, 2024	August 27, 2025	October 10, 2025	\$100.00
Quarter 3 2024	October 10, 2024	August 27, 2025	October 10, 2025	\$100.00
Quarter 4 2024	January 10, 2025	August 27, 2025	October 10, 2025	\$100.00
Quarter 1 2025	April 10, 2025	August 27, 2025	October 10, 2025	\$100.00
Quarter 2 2025	July 10, 2025	August 15, 2026	October 10, 2025	\$100.00
Quarter 3 2025	October 10, 2025	August 15, 2026	April 3, 2026	\$5,000.00
Quarter 4 2025	January 10, 2026	August 15, 2026	April 3, 2026	\$5,000.00

In mitigation, Respondent stated she did not file quarterly CDRs for the Council Campaign on advice of legal counsel, as that campaign remains the subject of ongoing litigation. Respondent also testified that the failure to disclose an expenditure to Vistaprint in the Mayoral Campaign was

JX # 7

unintentional, and that the delayed deposit of the contribution check from Tiina Vaska was due to a combination of busyness and misunderstanding between bank staff and herself.

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 Ann Peets is in violation of seven (7) counts of Section 8-13-1308(B) for failing to timely file the following CDRs: Quarter 2 2024, Quarter 3 2024, Quarter 4, 2024, Quarter 1 2025, Quarter 2 2025, Quarter 3 2025, and Quarter 4 2025.

The Panel further finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(F) for failing to properly disclose a campaign expenditure to Vistaprint; one (1) count of Section of 8-13-1312 for failing to timely deposit a campaign contribution from Tiina Vaska; and one (1) count of Section 8-13-1302 for failing to maintain invoices, receipts, or bills for campaign expenditures.

THEREFORE, Respondent is hereby issued a Public Reprimand and assessed a reduced civil penalty of \$4,000.00, a reduced late-filing penalty of \$5,500.00, and an administrative fee of \$2,000.00, for a total of \$11,500.00, to be paid within one (1) year of Respondent's receipt of this Order.

AND, pursuant to Section 8-13-320 of the Ethics Act, if the \$11,500.00 is not paid in full within one (1) year from Respondent's receipt of this Order, the total amount owed shall revert to the maximum possible assessment of \$18,500.00 (a civil penalty of \$6,000.00, an administrative fee of \$2,000.00, and late-filing fees totaling \$10,500.00) and the Commission shall enter a judgment against Respondent in the amount of \$18,500.00 with the Clerk of Court's Office in the county of Respondent's last known residence. In that event, the Clerk of Court shall enter this Order in the amount of \$18,500.00 in its judgment rolls, without cost to the Commission.

JK #8

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

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

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



F. XAVIER STARKES, HEARING CHAIR

Columbia, South Carolina