

THE WILMINGTON ETHICS COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF ZANTHIA OLIVER

CASE NO. 2022-02

Public Reprimand

On November 13, 2023, Steven P. Wood, Esq. Special Counsel to the Wilmington Ethics Commission, and Respondent Council Member Zanthia Oliver (“Ms. Oliver”), represented by William J. Rhodunda, Jr., presented to the Wilmington Ethics Commission (the “Commission”) for its approval an Agreed Disposition to publicly reprimand. Oliver for her admitted violation of Sections 2-341(a) and Section 2-345.1(c)(1)(a)(8) of the Wilmington City Code.

Whereby, on November 14, 2023, at its regularly scheduled public meeting, the Commission approved the Agreed Disposition.

WHEREFORE, the Wilmington Ethics Commission hereby issues the following Public Reprimand of Council Member Zanthia Oliver for her violation of Sections 2-341(a) and Section 2-345.1(c)(1)(a)(8) of the Wilmington City Code.

Procedural Background

After receiving a Complaint that Ms. Oliver may have violated one or more provisions of the City ethics requirements, on September 10, 2022, the Commission voted to refer the matter to the City Solicitor for further investigation. Pursuant to the codified Code of Conduct and the Rules of the Wilmington Ethics Commission (the “Commission Rules”), the Solicitor appointed Steven P. Wood, Esq. as its Special Counsel to investigate the matter. He provided the Commission a Statement of Alleged Violation on September 11, 2023. On September 12, 2023, the Commission considered the Statement of Alleged Violation and voted to proceed with the matter. On November 13, 2023, the parties agreed to an Agreed Disposition and submitted it to the Commission. The Commission approved the Agreed disposition on November 14, 2023.

Findings of Fact

In July of 2022 CM Oliver sponsored an event called “Love Is In The Air” as part of the City’s Community Day celebration. The event took place on July 16, 2022 at Wilmington’s Brown/Burton/Winchester Park. The City’s Office of Cultural

Affairs assessed a \$610 fee for the use of park, vendor permits and a band shell. CM Oliver agree to pay the \$610 fee out of her City Council discretionary funds. On July 20, 2022, at the request of CM Oliver, the City issued check number 200109 in the amount of \$610, made payable to the City of Wilmington. On August 1, 2022, CM Oliver endorsed the check and deposited it in her personal bank account. On August 29, 2022, CM Oliver was notified that she had improperly endorsed and cashed a check that was made payable to the City. CM Oliver then promptly reimbursed the City for the full amount of the check. The Special Counsel did not find any evidence that CM Oliver intended to appropriate the funds at issue for her personal use.

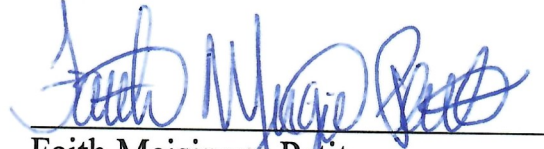
In August of 2022, CM Oliver was working in partnership with the Eastside Community Association (“ESCA”), who were sponsoring an event called “A Salute to Women Veterans,” which was to be held at the Chase Center on the Riverfront on September 8, 2022. On or about August 22, 2022, CM Oliver asked that a City check in the amount of \$4,900 be issued (payable to ESCA) for the purpose of paying the deposit required by the Chase Center. The check was given to CM Oliver at her request. It was eventually discovered that CM Oliver had endorsed the check herself and deposited it into the ESCA’s bank account. CM Oliver later explained that she was able to deposit the check for \$4,900 into the ESCA’s bank account even though the account was closed or inactive because she had been “on and off the Board for years.” CM Oliver’s financial disclosure forms for 2021 and 2022 do not contain any mention of any service on any corporate or non-profit boards.

CM Oliver admits that the above stipulated conduct by her constitutes violations of Sections 2-341(a) and Section 2-345.1(c)(1)(a)(8) of the Wilmington City Code. Section 2-341(a) provides in pertinent part that each city elected official “shall endeavor to pursue a course of conduct which will not raise any justifiable suspicion among the public that he or she is engaging in acts which are in violation of his or her public trust and which course of conduct will not reflect unfavorably upon the city and its government.” Section 2-345.1(c)(1)(a)(8) provides in pertinent part that all elected officials shall file a yearly financial disclosure report which requires identification of “any corporate and/or non-profit board memberships of the filer and household members.” The Commission requires identification of board memberships, including *ex officio* memberships, whether paid or unpaid.

Public Reprimand

Accordingly, having approved the Agreed Disposition, it is the decision of the Wilmington Ethics Commission to impose a Public Reprimand of Council Member Zanthia Oliver, and Ms. Oliver is hereby reprimanded.¹

IT IS SO ORDERED This 14th Day of November.



Faith Meisinger-Petit
Chair of the City of Wilmington
Ethics Commission

¹ The Commission notes that it previously issued a public reprimand to CM Oliver on April 18, 2023.