

BEFORE THE
STATE OF FLORIDA
COMMISSION ON ETHICS

COMMISSION ON ETHICS

CONFIDENTIAL

In re LYNN STONER,

Respondent.

Complaint No. 23-255

DETERMINATION OF INVESTIGATIVE JURISDICTION
AND ORDER TO INVESTIGATE

UPON REVIEW of this complaint, I find as follows:

1. This complaint was filed by Special Agent William Cates, of the Broward County Office of the Inspector General.
2. The Respondent, Lynn Stoner, was allegedly the Mayor of Plantation, Florida, at the time of the alleged misconduct.
3. The complaint alleges that Strata Group, LLC, had a pending code enforcement case with the City of Plantation, Florida ("the City") with a fine that had accrued to \$181,500. Strata Group's registered agent and managing officer at the time was allegedly the now-deceased Christopher Longworth.
4. The complaint alleges that Respondent called a city building official, Dan Ezzedine, and asked him for a "favor." Respondent allegedly asked Mr. Ezzedine to void code violations allegedly committed by Strata Group.
5. The complaint alleges that Respondent also asked Mr. Ezzedine to write a letter to Mr. Longworth's bank stating that Strata Group had resolved the code violations on the subject property and that the City had discharged the fines.

6. The complaint alleges that Respondent explained to Mr. Ezzedine that Mr. Longworth was attempting to close on a new construction loan in New York City, but the bank would not close on the loan if the code enforcement case was still pending. Mr. Ezzedine allegedly refused to comply with Respondent's requests. Respondent then allegedly stated she would write the letter herself and hung up on Mr. Ezzedine.

7. Mr. Longworth allegedly emailed Respondent a draft of the letter he needed. Respondent allegedly edited the draft from Mr. Longworth only by changing the closing language, adding the signature block of the City's Chief Administrative Officer, Jason Nunemaker, and placing it on the City's official letterhead.

8. The complaint alleges Respondent signed this letter the day after she received the draft, which falsely asserted that Strata Group had resolved the code enforcement case and property lien. Respondent was allegedly aware that these statements were false because Mr. Ezzedine informed her that the violations were still outstanding and because Respondent had retrieved the City's code enforcement records herself, which allegedly reflected that Strata Group had not resolved its code violation, nor had it paid its fine. Respondent also allegedly caused Mr. Nunemaker to sign the same letter.

9. Mr. Nunemaker then allegedly provided the letter to Mr. Longworth, who then provided the letter to the lender and title company associated with the loan he was trying to obtain. According to the complaint, Mr. Longworth closed on the loan approximately two weeks after the letter was provided.

10. Furthermore, the complaint alleges that Respondent attempted to influence Mr. Ezzedine to disregard his official duties with regard to Mr. Longworth's permit issues and code violations for several months. In addition to the allegations above, Respondent also allegedly

pressured Mr. Ezzedine to allow Mr. Longworth to continue construction on a new project he began without obtaining a permit, and also pressured him to keep City inspectors away from the site. Allegedly, after Mr. Ezzedine repeatedly refused to comply, Respondent terminated his employment.

11. The allegations in paragraphs 3 through 10 indicate possible violations of Section 112.313(6), Florida Statutes.

WHEREFORE, staff of the Commission on Ethics shall conduct a preliminary investigation of this complaint for a probable cause determination of whether the Respondent has violated Section 112.313(6), Florida Statutes, as set forth in paragraphs 3 through 10 above.

February 8, 2024
Date

Kerrie J. Stillman
Kerrie J. Stillman
Executive Director
Florida Commission on Ethics

KJS/jcb