

**BEFORE THE CITY OF ATLANTA
BOARD OF ETHICS**

In the Matter of:

Ronnell Collier

Respondent

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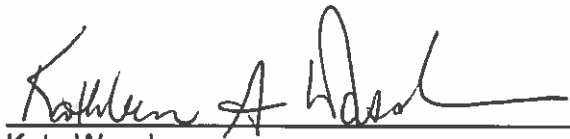
Case No. CO-16-007

DECISION AND ORDER

This matter came before the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics for a decision on May 19, 2016, prior to the Board's finding of probable cause and an enforcement hearing. Having considered the attached settlement agreement, the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics approves the agreement and orders that Respondent, Ronnell Collier, pay a total fine of \$150 from personal funds on or before June 1, 2016, for her violations of section 2-817 of the City's Code of Ethics.

So ordered this 1st day of June, 2016.

For the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics



Kate Wasch
Chair, Board of Ethics

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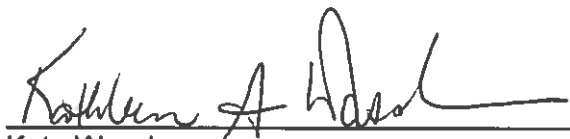
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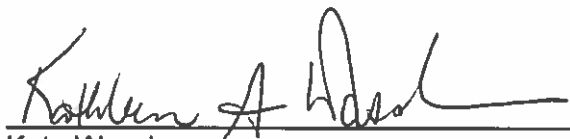
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SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

This settlement agreement is made between Jabu M. Sengova, the Associate Ethics Officer for the Atlanta Ethics Office, and Ronnell Collier, a former city employee charged with violating the City’s Code of Ethics.

The parties agree to the following terms to resolve this matter prior to a probable cause determination by the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics. The Board of Ethics is responsible for administering, implementing, and enforcing the Standards of Conduct contained in the Atlanta Municipal Code.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Ronnell Collier is a former Permit Technician for the Office of Buildings in the Department of Planning and Community Development who was employed with the city for 9 years. As a permit technician, she was responsible for accepting and reviewing all plans submitted to the Office of Buildings; and she worked closely with permit expeditors doing business with the City.
2. On March 14, 2016, the Ethics Office initiated an ethics complaint against Ms. Collier based on a lengthy investigation conducted by the Department of Law’s Compliance Unit into allegations of misconduct within the Office of Buildings involving plan review, permit issuance and gratuities. The ethics complaint alleged that Ms. Collier solicited and obtained gratuities in the form of three cash loans over a period of three years from permit expeditor, Tiara Crumby, in violation of Sections 2-817 and 2-818 of the Atlanta Code of Ethics.
3. The Ethics Office sent a formal notice of the complaint to Ms. Collier requesting a written response to the allegations. In her written response, Ms. Collier asserts that she “never solicited funds or gratuities of any form from Ms. Crumby.” She stated that she and Ms. Crumby were close friends and had a personal relationship outside the office. However, Ms. Collier admits that Ms. Crumby became aware of her financial hardship and offered to assist her with cash loans which she accepted.
4. Based on the Department of Law’s investigative report, a review of city records showed that Ms. Collier frequently processed permit applications submitted by Ms. Crumby. However, there was no evidence that any special favors or privileges were granted in exchange for the loans.
5. Ms. Collier has fully cooperated with resolution of this matter.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

6. Ms. Collier is a former city employee who is subject to the Code of Ethics, found in sections 2-801 to 2-824 in the City's Code of Ordinances. See Atlanta, Ga., Code § 2-801.
7. Section 2-818 prohibits employees from soliciting or accepting anything of value calculated to influence a vote, decision, or the exercise of official authority. Section 2-817 prohibits any city officials from soliciting or accepting anything of value from a prohibited source. Section 2-801 defines a "gratuity" as "anything of value given by or received from a prohibited source." A prohibited source includes any person, business, or entity that an employee knows is seeking to do or does business with the City.
8. The solicitation and acceptance of funds from prohibited sources are violations of section 2-818 and 2-817 of the Code of Ethics.
9. Pursuant to the agreement reached in this matter, the Ethics Office will not proceed on any violation of Section 2-818.
10. Ms. Collier accepted things of value from prohibited sources when she received cash loans from a person who works as a permit expeditor in violation of Section 2-817.

AGREEMENT

11. The Respondent, Ronnell Collier, acknowledges that she violated the city's ethical standards when she accepted cash loans from permit expeditor Tiara Crumby.
12. She agrees to pay the City of Atlanta a civil penalty of \$150 from personal funds on or before June 1, 2016.
13. The parties agree to enter this settlement agreement to resolve all factual and legal issues in this matter and to reach a final disposition without the necessity of an evidentiary hearing before the Board to determine Respondent's liability.
14. The Respondent understands and voluntarily waives all procedural rights under the Code of Ordinances, including the determination of probable cause and the right to personally appear before the Board, subpoena witnesses to testify, confront and cross-examine all witnesses, and have the Board hear the matter at any enforcement hearing.
15. The Respondent acknowledges that this agreement is not binding on any other law enforcement or governmental agency and does not preclude the Board of Ethics from referring this matter to, cooperating with, or assisting any other law enforcement or government agency on this or any other related matter.
16. The Associate Ethics Officer will submit this settlement agreement for consideration by the Board of Ethics at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the Board must enter an order approving the agreement before it becomes the final decision and order in the case.
17. The parties agree that this agreement shall become null and void in the event that the Board refuses to accept it. The Respondent further agrees that no member of the Board

of Ethics or its staff shall be disqualified from participating in any hearing before the Board because of prior consideration of this settlement agreement.

18. The failure of the Respondent to comply with this agreement may result in initiation of an enforcement action for violation of its terms.

Ronnell Collier
Respondent

Date

Jabu M. Sengova
Associate Ethics Officer

Date