STATE OF NEW YORK COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

In the Matter of the Proceeding Pursuant to Section 44, subdivision 4, of the Judiciary Law in Relation to

ROBERT J. MULLER,

AGREED STATEMENT OF FACTS

a Justice of the Supreme Court,	
Fourth Judicial District, Warren County.	

Subject to the approval of the Commission on Judicial Conduct:

IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED by and between

Robert H. Tembeckjian, Administrator and Counsel to the Commission, and the Honorable Robert J. Muller ("Respondent"), who is represented in this proceeding by Peter J. Moschetti, Jr., that further proceedings are waived and that the Commission shall make its determination upon the following facts, exhibits, and appendix, which shall constitute the entire record in lieu of a hearing.

1. Respondent was admitted to the practice of law in New York in 1979. He has been a Justice of the Supreme Court, Fourth Judicial District, Warren County, since January 1, 2009. Although Respondent's current term expires on December 31, 2036, he turns 70 years of age in 2025 and therefore must retire on December 31, 2025, unless he seeks certification to serve an additional two years,

pursuant to Article VI, Section 25(b) of the Constitution of the State of New York, and Section 115 of the Judiciary Law.

2. Respondent was served with a Formal Written Complaint dated September 30, 2024. He filed a Verified Answer dated November 18, 2024.

As to Charge I

- 3. From September 2022 to January 2024, when the Appellate Division remanded the matter to a different judge, Respondent presided over and failed to disqualify himself from the personal injury case of *Minckler and Howell v Estate of Thomas Shelly, III, D'Ella, Inc., D'Ella Honda of Glens Falls, and D'Ella Automotive, Inc.* (hereinafter *Minckler v D'Ella*), notwithstanding the following:
 - A. The law firm representing the D'Ella defendants Bartlett, Pontiff,

 Stewart & Rhodes held a fundraiser in support of Respondent's

 candidacy in 2022 for re-election as a Justice of the Supreme Court,

 and one of the partners in that firm was a member of Respondent's

 re-election committee;
 - B. Counsel for the plaintiffs in *Minckler v D'Ella* cited the political association between Respondent and the Bartlett Pontiff firm in a letter seeking Respondent's recusal from the case on October 4, 2022;

- C. Multiple previously published Opinions of the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics advised that a judge is required to recuse in such circumstances during the course of the campaign, and in some instances for two years thereafter, subject to remittal;
- D. On October 7, 2022, Respondent requested his own Opinion from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics, summarizing the facts pertaining to the request that he recuse from *Minckler v D'Ella*;
- E. The Subcommittee issued Opinion SC2022-048 to Respondent, dated October 12, 2022, stating that he was disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving Bartlett Pontiff during the course of the campaign;
- F. Respondent withheld the Opinion from the attorneys and parties until after his re-election on November 8, 2022, disclosing it to them by letter dated November 16, 2022, in which he declined to recuse himself from the case; and
- G. The plaintiff's counsel thereafter made a motion for Respondent's recusal, which he denied by order dated January 4, 2023.

As to the Specifications to Charge I

- 4. In November 2020, *Minckler v D'Ella*, a personal injury case in Supreme Court, Warren County, was assigned to Respondent, who kept the assignment until January 2024. Attorney Christopher P. Flint of the law firm Cooper Erving & Savage represented the plaintiffs. Attorney Kenneth L. Bobrow of the law firm Felt Evans represented the Estate of Thomas E. Shelly, III, and Attorney Malcolm B. O'Hara, a principal at the law firm Bartlett, Pontiff, Stewart & Rhodes ("Bartlett Pontiff"), represented the *D'Ella* defendants.
- 5. In December 2021, Respondent publicly announced his candidacy for re-election as Supreme Court Justice for the Fourth Judicial District, Warren County, in the 2022 election cycle.
- 6. In August 2022, Respondent secured nominations from the Democratic and Conservative political parties and, among other things, formed the Committee to Re-Elect Robert J. Muller Supreme Court Justice and established a campaign website.
- 7. In September and October 2022, Respondent's campaign website listed Malcolm B. O'Hara as a member of his campaign committee and as one of several dozen attorneys who had endorsed Respondent's candidacy. Screenshots of the committee and endorsement pages from Respondent's campaign website are appended as Exhibit A and Exhibit B, respectively.

- 8. In September and October 2022, Respondent's campaign website posted an invitation to a fundraiser for Respondent's campaign hosted by Bartlett Pontiff at the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls on October 6, 2022. A screenshot of the invitation is appended as Exhibit C.
- 9. In late September 2022, the *Minckler* plaintiffs learned of Mr. O'Hara's and Bartlett Pontiff's involvement in Respondent's re-election campaign from a source other than Respondent. Respondent had not disclosed to the parties in *Minckler v D'Ella* the involvement of either Mr. O'Hara or Bartlett Pontiff in his re-election campaign.
- 10. On October 3, 2022, during a phone conference in connection with the *Minckler* case, Mr. Flint requested on behalf of the plaintiffs that Respondent recuse himself based on the involvement of Mr. O'Hara and Bartlett Pontiff in his re-election campaign. Respondent instructed Mr. Flint to make his request in writing, on notice to defense counsel.
- 11. On October 4, 2022, Mr. Flint emailed a letter requesting Respondent's recusal to Respondent, with a copy to defense counsel, based on "Attorney O'Hara and the Bartlett Pontiff firm's direct fundraising involvement" in Respondent's re-election campaign. A copy of Mr. Flint's emailed letter is appended as Exhibit D.

- 12. By email dated October 4, 2022, Mr. O'Hara said he disagreed with Mr. Flint's request, but disclosed that he was a member of Respondent's campaign committee and that he planned to write a letter on Respondent's behalf to a local newspaper. A copy of O'Hara's email is appended as Exhibit E.
- 13. On October 6, 2022, during a video conference with the attorneys in the *Minckler* case, Respondent declined to recuse himself.
- 14. On October 6, 2022, at Respondent's direction, his Principal Law Clerk, Jennifer Purcell Jeram, (A) advised the attorneys in *Minckler* via email that Respondent had sought an Opinion from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Center¹ ("JCEC") "relative to the issue of his recusal in this matter," and (B) asked Mr. Flint to hold any motion practice in abeyance pending receipt of an Opinion from JCEC, which Respondent would "promptly" share with all counsel. A copy of Ms. Jeram's email is appended as Exhibit F.
- 15. On October 6, 2022, Bartlett Pontiff held the fundraiser for Respondent's re-election campaign at the Queensbury Hotel. Respondent and Mr. O'Hara were in attendance.
- 16. On October 7, 2022, Respondent sought advice from JCEC via telephone and email regarding Mr. Flint's recusal request. A copy of

¹ The Judicial Campaign Ethics Center and the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee are affiliated with the Unified Court System's Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics.

Respondent's written request is appended as **Exhibit G**.

- 17. On October 12, 2022, Respondent received Opinion SC2022-048 from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee, which advised Respondent *inter alia* that he was "disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving defense counsel and his law firm, including partners and associates, *during the course of [his] judicial campaign*" (emphasis in original). A copy of the Opinion is appended as <u>Exhibit H</u>. Respondent did not share the Opinion with the parties or attorneys in the *Minckler* matter at that time.
- 18. In mid-October 2022, multiple local newspapers published a letter by Mr. O'Hara endorsing Respondent's re-election campaign.
- 19. On October 14, 2022, in connection with the Minckler case, Mr. O'Hara filed a motion to strike the plaintiffs' Note of Issue, which had been filed on September 21, 2022, and, alternatively, requested an extension of time to conduct an independent medical examination of the plaintiff.
- 20. By email dated October 20, 2022, Mr. Flint asked Respondent to hold Mr. O'Hara's motion in abeyance pending the outcome of Respondent's decision regarding recusal. A copy of the email is appended as Exhibit I. Respondent did not respond to Mr. Flint's request.
 - 21. On November 8, 2022, Respondent was re-elected to judicial office.

- 22. By letter dated November 16, 2022, Respondent provided the attorneys in the *Minckler* case with a copy of Opinion SC2022-048 and wrote, "I accept the subcommittee's guidance and decline the request for recusal." A copy of the letter is appended as Exhibit J.
- 23. On November 23, 2022, the plaintiffs filed a formal motion for Respondent's recusal from the *Minckler* case.
- 24. By Order dated January 4, 2023, a copy of which is appended as Exhibit K, Respondent denied the plaintiffs' recusal motion.
- 25. The plaintiffs appealed Respondent's denial of the recusal motion to the Appellate Division, Third Department, which by Memorandum and Order dated January 4, 2024, found that Respondent abused his discretion in denying the motion for recusal and *inter alia* criticized him for (A) not disclosing Mr. O'Hara's and Bartlett Pontiff's involvement in his re-election campaign, (B) disregarding the advice of Opinion SC2022-048 by not disqualifying himself after receiving it, and (C) failing to disclose the Opinion until a month later, after he had been re-elected to judicial office. The Appellate Division remanded the case to another judge. A copy of the Appellate Division's Memorandum and Order is appended as Exhibit L.
- 26. By reason of the foregoing, Respondent should be disciplined for cause, pursuant to Article VI, Section 22, subdivision (a), of the Constitution and

Section 44, subdivision 1, of the Judiciary Law, in that Respondent failed to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary by failing to maintain high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary would be preserved, in violation of Section 100.1 of the Rules of the Chief Administrator of the Courts Governing Judicial Conduct ("Rules"); failed to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, in that he failed to respect and comply with the law and failed to act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, in violation of Section 100.2(A) of the Rules; and failed to perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently, in that he failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, in a proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned, in violation of Sections 100.3(E)(1) and 100.3(F) of the Rules.

As to Charge II

27. From May 2022 to November 8, 2022, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from numerous cases involving attorneys from four law firms that were engaged in fundraising for Respondent's 2022 judicial campaign, contrary to a number of previously published Advisory Opinions and notwithstanding that on October 12, 2022, Respondent received his own Advisory Opinion stating that his recusal from such cases, subject to remittal, was mandatory during his campaign.

As to the Specifications to Charge II

- 28. In December 2021, Respondent publicly announced his candidacy for re-election as Supreme Court Justice for the Fourth Judicial District, Warren County, in the 2022 election cycle.
- 29. On May 12, 2022, the law firms of E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy and Maguire Cardona co-hosted a fundraiser for Respondent's judicial campaign at the Fort Orange Club in Albany, New York.
- 30. On July 28, 2022, the law firm of McPhillips, Fitzgerald & Cullum hosted a fundraiser for Respondent's judicial campaign at the Fort William Henry Conference Center, in Lake George, New York.
- 31. On October 6, 2022, Bartlett Pontiff hosted a fundraiser for Respondent's campaign at the Queensbury Hotel, in Queensbury, New York.
- 32. On October 12, 2022, Respondent received Opinion SC2022-048 from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics, *inter alia* advising him that during his campaign, he was disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving counsel and a law firm that had hosted fundraisers for him (Exhibit H).
 - 33. On November 8, 2022, Respondent was re-elected to judicial office.
- 34. From May 2022 to November 8, 2022, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from cases involving attorneys from the

law firms of (A) E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy, (B) Maguire Cardona, (C) McPhillips, Fitzgerald & Cullum, and (D) Bartlett Pontiff, as listed on the appended <u>Schedule 1</u>, notwithstanding that each law firm was engaged in fundraising activity in support of Respondent's re-election campaign.

By reason of the foregoing, Respondent should be disciplined for 35. cause, pursuant to Article VI, Section 22, subdivision (a), of the Constitution and Section 44, subdivision 1, of the Judiciary Law, in that Respondent failed to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary by failing to maintain high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary would be preserved, in violation of Section 100.1 of the Rules; failed to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, in that he failed to respect and comply with the law and failed to act in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, in violation of Section 100.2(A) of the Rules; and failed to perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently, in that he failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, in a proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned, in violation of Sections 100.3(E)(1) and 100.3(F) of the Rules.

As to Charge III

36. From December 2022 to January 2024, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from three cases in which his 2022 judicial

campaign committee Finance Chair and Finance Co-Chair appeared as attorneys, notwithstanding that multiple previously published Advisory Opinions stated that during a judge's campaign and for a period of two years following the election, the judge was required to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, in any case involving attorneys who held leadership positions in the judge's campaign.

As to the Specifications to Charge III

- 37. In December 2021, Respondent publicly announced his candidacy for re-election as Supreme Court Justice for the Fourth Judicial District, Warren County, in the 2022 election cycle.
- 38. John J. Carusone, Jr., Esq., and Dennis J. Tarantino, Esq., held the positions of Finance Chair and Finance Co-Chair, respectively, on Respondent's campaign committee for re-election to judicial office.
- 39. On October 12, 2022, Respondent received Opinion SC2022-048 from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics, *inter alia* advising him that during his campaign, he was disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving appearances by counsel who are active in his campaign (Exhibit H). Opinion SC2022-048 also cited Advisory Opinions 03-64, 09-245 and 12-164, which each held *inter alia* that a judge must recuse, subject to remittal, in any case involving attorneys who held leadership positions in the judge's campaign, such as

"campaign manager, campaign coordinator, finance chair or treasurer," during the campaign and for two years beyond the date of the election.

- 40. On November 8, 2022, Respondent was re-elected to judicial office.
- 41. From December 21, 2022, to August 24, 2023, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from *Cerilli v Town of Easton*, in which Mr. Carusone represented the plaintiff.
- 42. From June 6, 2023, to August 21, 2023, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from *City of Glens Falls v List of Delinquent Taxes 2021*, in which Mr. Tarantino represented the plaintiff.
- 43. From July 27, 2023, to January 4, 2024, Respondent failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, from 101 Fiddlers Elbow Road, LLC v Town of Greenwich et al., in which Mr. Carusone represented the plaintiff.
- 44. By reason of the foregoing, Respondent should be disciplined for cause, pursuant to Article VI, Section 22, subdivision (a), of the Constitution and Section 44, subdivision 1, of the Judiciary Law, in that Respondent failed to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary by failing to maintain high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary would be preserved, in violation of Section 100.1 of the Rules; failed to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, in that he failed to respect and comply with the law and failed to act in a manner that promotes public confidence

in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, in violation of Section 100.2(A) of the Rules; and failed to perform the duties of judicial office impartially and diligently, in that he failed to disqualify himself, subject to remittal, in a proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned, in violation of Sections 100.3(E)(1) and 100.3(F) of the Rules.

Additional Factors

- 45. Respondent avers that he will retire from judicial office on December 31, 2025, and will not seek certification to continue judicial service.
- 46. Respondent has been cooperative with the Commission throughout this proceeding. For example, in response to a Commission inquiry on March 27, 2024, about his failure to recuse in *Minckler v D'Ella* and whether he had presided over any other matters involving Bartlett Pontiff during his candidacy, Respondent identified such cases and volunteered information not previously known to the Commission about fundraisers held for him by the other law firms identified herein and listed on the appended <u>Schedule 1</u>.
- 47. Respondent acknowledges and regrets that he did not promptly disclose Opinion SC2022-048 to the attorneys and parties in *Minckler v D'Ella*. He claims to have interpreted the Opinion in such a way as to allow him to avoid recusal if he took no judicial action in the case between his receipt of the Opinion and the date of the election on November 8, 2022. Respondent now concedes this

interpretation was erroneous and self-serving, in that it avoided public disclosure of the facts herein while he was a candidate for reelection.

- 48. Respondent acknowledges that, in addition to *Minckler v D'Ella*,

 Opinion SC2022-048 should have prompted him to disqualify himself

 immediately, subject to remittal, from all matters listed on the appended <u>Schedule</u>

 1.
- 49. Respondent acknowledges that it was improper for him to have presided over cases involving his campaign Finance Chair and Finance Co-Chair within two years of his campaign, and that the Opinions cited in Opinion SC2022-048 should have put him on notice that he was required to recuse himself from such cases, subject to remittal.
- 50. Following receipt of the Commission's inquiry dated March 27, 2024, Respondent wrote to the attorneys involved in each matter identified in Charges I and II, disclosed the respective involvement of the law firm and/or attorneys during his 2022 judicial campaign, and offered to recuse himself at the request of a party. In one matter, Respondent promptly recused himself at a party's request. No other parties requested Respondent's recusal.

IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND AGREED that Respondent withdraws from his Answer any denials or defenses inconsistent with this Agreed Statement of Facts.

IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND AGREED that the parties to this Agreed Statement of Facts respectfully recommend to the Commission that the appropriate sanction is public Censure based upon the judicial misconduct set forth above. The Administrator notes that he would have recommended suspension from office were that sanction available to the Commission under the Constitution.

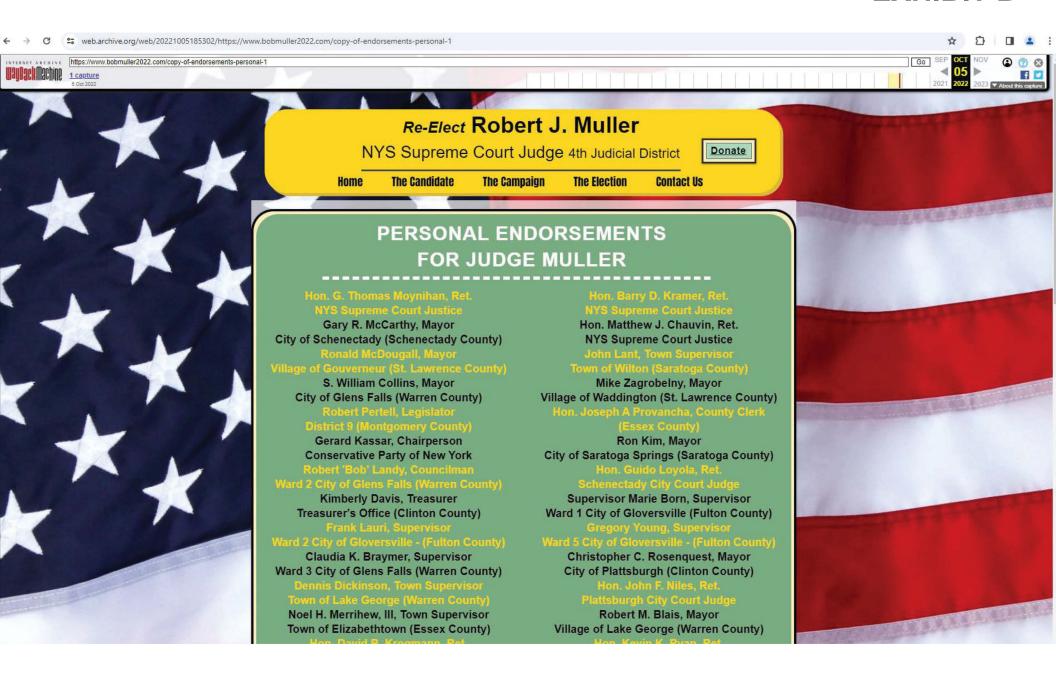
IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND AGREED that if the Commission accepts this Agreed Statement of Facts, the parties waive oral argument and waive further submissions to the Commission as to the issues of misconduct and sanction, and that the Commission shall thereupon impose a public Censure without further submission of the parties, based solely upon this Agreed Statement. If the Commission rejects this Agreed Statement of Facts, the matter shall proceed to a hearing and the statements made herein shall not be used by the Commission, Respondent or the Administrator and Counsel to the Commission.

Dated: Honorable Robert J. Muller Respondent Peter J. Moschetti, Jr., Esq. Attorney for Respondent Dated: February 10, 2025 Robert H. Tembeckjian Administrator & Counsel to the Commission (Cathleen S. Cenci and S. Peter Pedrotty, Of Counsel)

EXHIBIT A



EXHIBIT B









Malcolm B. O'Hara, Esq. Ara Asadourian, Esq. Donald W. Boyajian, Esq. Victor L. Mazzotti, Esq. Lloyd G. Grandy II, Esq. Timothy Horigan, Esq. James A. Lombardo, Esq. Jonathan C. Lapper, Esq. Robert N. Gregor, Esq. John B. DuCharme, Esq. Robert S. Stockton, Esq. Daniel R. Santola, Esq. William C. Foster, Esq. Michael D. Billok, Esq. Joseph D. Giannetti, Esq. Matthew J. Jones, Esq.

Joseph T. Cardany, Esq.

John J. Carusone, Jr., Esq. Gregory S. Mills, Esq. Peter J. Moschetti, Jr., Esq. Hon. Kevin K. Ryan, Ret. Congressman Bill Owens, Ret. James G. Snyder, Esq. Stephen S. Vanier, Esq. Jeffrey K. Anderson, Esq. CJ Madonna, Esq. Anthony V. Cardona, Esq. Richard R. Maguire, Esq. Anthony P. Adang, Esq. William M. Finucane, Esq. Gerald J. Ducharme, Esq. Charles B. Nash, Esq. Colm P. Ryan, Esq. Matthew D. Norfolk, Esq.







Victor L. Mazzotti, Esq. Lloyd G. Grandy II, Esq. Timothy Horigan, Esq. James A. Lombardo, Esq. Jonathan C. Lapper, Esq. Robert N. Gregor, Esq. John B. DuCharme, Esq. Robert S. Stockton, Esq. Daniel R. Santola, Esq. William C. Foster, Esq. Michael D. Billok, Esq. Joseph D. Giannetti, Esq. Matthew J. Jones, Esq. Joseph T. Cardany, Esq. John M. Crotty, Esq.

Hon. Kevin K. Ryan, Ret. Congressman Bill Owens, Ret. James G. Snyder, Esq. Stephen S. Vanier, Esq. Jeffrey K. Anderson, Esq. CJ Madonna, Esq. Anthony V. Cardona, Esq. Richard R. Maguire, Esq. Anthony P. Adang, Esq. William M. Finucane, Esq. Gerald J. Ducharme, Esq. Charles B. Nash, Esq. Colm P. Ryan, Esq. Matthew D. Norfolk, Esq. Michael L. Costello, Esq.







EXHIBIT C

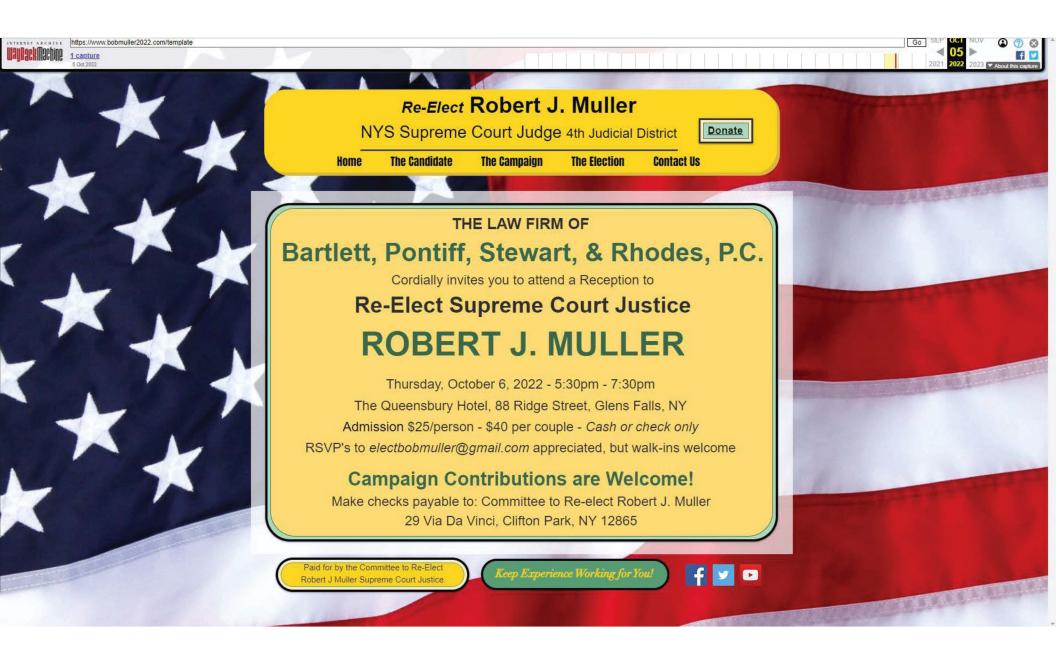


EXHIBIT D

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/23/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 68

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/23/2022



ATTORNEYS AT LAW · ESTABLISHED 1785 coopererving.com

MICHAEL A. KORNSTEIN SUSAN CARROLL PICOTTE PHILLIP G. STECK KELLY L. MALLOY POGODA DAVID C. ROWLEY CARLO A.C. DE OLIVEIRA ±

DENNIS W. HABEL CAROLINE W. T. LANG MATTHEW E. MINNIEFIELD

*ALSO ADMITTED IN VERMONI ±ALSO ADMITTED IN MASSACHUSETTS COOPER ERVING & SAVAGE LLP 39 NORTH PEARL STREET ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207-2797 (518) 449-3900 FACSIMILE (518) 432-3111

<u>Clifton Park Office</u> 1520 Crescent Road – Suite 400 Clifton Park, New York 12065 (518) 371-0716 JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1888-1938) WM. VAN RENSSELAER ERVING (1925-1940) B. JERMAIN SAVAGE (1910-1952)

SENIOR COUNSEL
TERRANCE P. CHRISTENSON

OF COUNSEL CHRISTOPHER P. FLINT* CAROLYN B. GEORGE

Reply to Albany Office t@coopererving.com direct dial: (518) 432-3156

October 4, 2022

Via Email: ChambersRMuller@nycourts.gov

Hon, Robert J. Muller Supreme Court Chambers Warren County Municipal Center 1340 State Route 9 Lake George, New York 12845

e: Minckler and Howell v. Estate of Thomas Shelly, III, D'Ella, Inc., D'Ella

Honda of Glens Falls, D'Ella Automotive, Inc.

Index No.: EF2020-67770

Dear Judge Muller:

My clients, Karen Minckler and Joseph Howell have become aware of Attorney O'Hara and the Bartlett Pontiff firm's direct fundraising involvement in your Honor's campaign for reelection. They are very uncomfortable with the apparent relationship and have instructed me to request that your Honor recuse himself from this matter.

Accordingly, I respectfully request on behalf of my clients that your Honor recuse himself from this case. In the event our request is granted, I further request that Fourth Judicial District Administrative Judge, Hon. Felix J. Catena be notified of the recusal as soon as possible, in order to facilitate prompt reassignment of the case and preservation of the January 23, 2023 trial date,

By copy of this letter via email, counsel for the respective defendants are placed on notice of this request.

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/23/2022 05:48 PM

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 68

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/23/2022

Hon, Robert J. Muller October 4, 2022 Page 2

Thank you.

Most Respectfully,

COOPER ERVING & SAVAGE LLP

Christopher P. Flint, Esq.

CPF/it

cc: Vis

Via Email
Malcolm B. O'Hara, Esq. (pha@bpsrlaw.com)
Kenneth L. Bobrow, Esq. (phage described by the complete sequence)

EXHIBIT E

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/23/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 69

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770 RECEIVED NYSCEF! of1/23/2022

Christopher Flint - RE: Minckler v D'Ella et al Index No.: EF2020-67770

"Malcolm B. O'Hara" < @bpsrlaw.com> From:

Christopher Flint < @coopererving.com>, "chambersrmuller@nycourts.g... To:

Date: 10/4/2022 12:20 PM

Subject: RE: Minckler v D'Ella et al Index No.; EF2020-67770

Iliana Torres (@coopererving.com), Ken Bobrow Cc:

Chris , I respectfully disagree that this requires Judge Muller to recuse himself. In the spirit of full disclosure however I am listed as member of his committee along with numerous other trial lawyers throughout the district and he Capital Region. I also plan to write a letter on his behalf to the local paper. Again, I believe neither of these requires his recusal. Sincerely, Mal O'Hara

From: Christopher Flint

Sent: Tuesday, October 4, 2022 11:42 AM To: chambersrmuller@nycourts.gov

Cc: Malcolm B. O'Hara @bpsrlaw.com>; Iliana Torres @coopererving.com>; Ken Bobrow

@felt-evans.com>

Subject: Minckler v D'Ella et al Index No.: EF2020-67770

Dear Judge Muller:

Please see the attached correspondence relative to the above.

Respectfully,

Christopher P. Flint Cooper Erving & Savage, LLP 39 North Pearl Street Albany, NY 12207Chirs (518) 449-3900

Fax: (518) 432-3111

EXHIBIT F

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/23/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 71

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770 Page 1 of 1 RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/23/2022

Christopher Flint - Minckler et al. v D'Ella, Inc., et al. (Index No. EF2020-67770; RJI No. 56-1-2020-0290)

From: "ChambersRMuller@nycourts.gov" <chambersrmuller@nycourts.gov>

"Coopererving.com" < @coopererving.com>, "Kenneth L. Bobrow"... To:

10/6/2022 12:26 PM Date:

Subject: Minckler et al. v D'Ella, Inc., et al. (Index No. EF2020-67770; RJI No. 56-1-2020-0290)

Dear Counselors:

In follow-up to this morning's conference, please be advised that Justice Muller has sought an opinion from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Center relative to the issue of his recusal in this matter. He asks that Attorney Flint hold any motion practice in abeyance pending the receipt of this opinion, which he will promptly share with all counsel.

Thank you for your attention to the foregoing. If you could please confirm your receipt of this email, it would be much appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Jennifer Purcell Jeram Principal Law Clerk to Hon. Robert J. Muller, J.S.C. Warren County Courthouse 1340 State Route 9 Lake George, New York 12845 Telephone: (518) 480-6346

Hon. Robert J Muller

From:

Hon. Robert J Muller

Sent:

Tuesday, October 11, 2022 11:32 AM

To:

contactJCEC

Subject:

FW: Robert J.MULLER,

Just a follow up for a few opinions to share with counsel

Thanks

From: Hon. Robert J Muller

Sent: Friday, October 7, 2022 11:55 AM

To: contactJCEC <contactJCEC@nycourts.gov>

Subject: Robert J.MULLER,

I'm following up a recent telephone call on a recusal request that has surfaced in the midst of my re-election campaign. Plaintiff's counsel requests a recusal where one of the defense counsel is on my re-election committee and his firm sponsored a recent fundraiser. This issue has come up previously but with full disclosure on the record - counsel and their clients declined to ask for a recusal. I have a substantial amount of public support from the legal community in the 11 counties of the 4th JD counties where I serve. If I automatically recused this would eviscerate my calendar. I assume I'm not the first sitting judge requiring guidance on this issue.

I'm attaching a recent NYLI article on the race, for some background.

Thanks RIM Hon. Robert J. Muller, J.S.C Chair – Bench Book for Trial Judges – New York Warren County Courthouse 1340 State Route 9 Lake George, New York 12845 Telephone: (518) 480-6346

Please be CAREFUL when clicking links or opening attachments.

EXHIBIT H

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/28/2022 05:48 PM

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/28/2022

JUDICIAL CAMPAIGN ETHICS SUBCOMMITTEE Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center 25 Beaver Street New York, New York 10004 1-888-600-JCEC (5232) jcec@nycourts.gov

Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 38

Hon. Margaret T. Walsh Hon. Lillian Wan Co-Chairs

October 12, 2022

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center

Hon, James D. Pagones Subcommittee Chair

Hon. Emilio Colaiacovo Hon. Nelida Malave-Gonzalez Hon. James P. Murphy Subcommittee Members

Rosemary Garland-Scott, Esq. Executive Director Hon. Robert Muller Warren County Courthouse 1340 State Route 9 Lake George, NY 12845

Re: SC2022-048

Dear Judge Muller:

Thank you for your attached inquiry, dated October 7, 2022, to the Judicial Campaign Ethics Center ("JCEC"). The Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee (the "Subcommittee") has been delegated authority by the full Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics (the "Committee") to provide candidates for judicial office with prompt responses to campaign-related ethics questions. The Subcommittee believes that your inquiry involves campaign-related activity, and therefore has determined that it may provide a response in this matter.

You have stated that you are a Supreme Court Justice, 4th Judicial District, seeking re-election to your current seat. You have stated that in a matter before you, plaintiff's counsel requested your recusal because one of the defense counsel serves on your re-election campaign committee and that attorney's law firm sponsored a recent fundraiser on your behalf. You have further stated that you have "a substantial amount of public support from the legal community" in your judicial district and that if you were to automatically recuse it would eviscerate your calendar.

In a telephone conversation with staff counsel, you explained that defense counsel has no "active" role in your campaign and is merely one of approximately 30 persons listed on your campaign letterhead. You have also stated that defense counsel's law firm has held only a single fund-raiser on your behalf. You have asked for guidance as to your recusal obligations under the circumstances.

The Committee has previously determined that the fact that a lawyer merely attends a judicial candidate's event, or voluntarily submitted his/her name to be used by the campaign committee, would not, standing alone, trigger any recusal obligations on the candidate's part, as long as the candidate believes he/she can be fair and impartial (Opinions 09-245; 04-106; 90-182). By contrast, the Committee has concluded that a judge who is running for re-election should exercise recusal, subject to remittal, when attorneys (or their partners or associates) who are engaged in fund-raising or in other active conduct in support of the judge's candidacy appear

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/28/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 38

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

before the judge *during the course of the campaign* (Opinions 03-64; 01-07; *see* Opinion 12-164). However, after the election, neither disclosure nor disqualification is required when the attorney (or his/her partners or associates) appears in the judge's court (*see id.*; Opinion 09-245).

Accordingly, you are advised that you are disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving defense counsel and his law firm, including partners and associates, *during the course of your judicial campaign (see* Opinion 03-64). You are further advised that you do not have any <u>post-election</u> disqualification or disclosure obligation when defense counsel or his law firm appears, as their involvement in your campaign consisted of hosting a single fund-raising event on your behalf (see Opinions 12-164; 09-245; 03-64).

The Subcommittee notes that ordinarily you would not be disqualified from presiding over matters involving defense counsel by virtue of his name appearing on your campaign letterhead since such listing, without more, constitutes a very minimal level of involvement in your judicial campaign for which even disclosure is not required (*see* Opinion 09-245).

Reliance on this Opinion. Please be advised that provided that your conduct comports with the advice contained herein, such conduct will be presumed proper for purposes of any subsequent investigation by the Commission on Judicial Conduct. You are further advised that this response provided by the Subcommittee, and the resulting presumption of propriety, applies only to you for conduct undertaken during your current window period. The presumption is expressly conditioned on the correctness and completeness of the facts supplied in your attached inquiry.

Mandatory Training Requirement. Please note that all judicial candidates (except those seeking Town or Village Justice positions) must complete a campaign ethics training program "any time after the candidate makes a public announcement of candidacy or authorizes solicitation or acceptance of contributions for a known judicial vacancy, but no later than 30 days after receiving the nomination for judicial office." 22 NYCRR 100.5(A)(4)(f). Please contact us at 1-888-600-JCEC (5232) to register for the training, or visit our website for further details.

Mandatory Financial Disclosure Requirement. All judicial candidates (except those seeking Town or Village Justice positions) must file a financial disclosure form for the preceding calendar year pursuant to either Part 40 or 22 NYCRR 100.5(A)(4)(g). Please visit our Financial Disclosures information page for general information on Rule 100.5(A)(4)(g), including a list of persons who are exempt from the rule. If you are not exempt, please contact the Ethics Commission as soon as possible to make sure you are in compliance.

For Further Assistance. The <u>amended rules</u> and a copy of <u>the Judicial</u> <u>Campaign Ethics Handbook</u> are also available on <u>our web site</u>. For further assistance on this or any other campaign-related ethics matter, please do not hesitate to <u>contact us</u>.

Very truly yours,

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/28/2022 05:48 PM

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 56 RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

Hon. James D. Pagones (ret.) Subcommittee Chair

Att.

4 of 4

EXHIBIT I

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/23/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 72

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770
Page 1 of 1
RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/23/2022

Christopher Flint - Minckler Motion to Strike

From: Christopher Flint

To: chambersrmuller@nycourts.gov

Date: 10/20/2022 2:28 PM

Subject: Minckler Motion to Strike

Cc: @bpsrlaw.com; Ken Bobrow

Dear Judge Muller:

I respectfully request that the Court hold in abeyance Attorney O'Hara's Motion to Strike and/or for an IME, presently returnable on October 27, 2022, until after your Honor makes a decision on the recusal issue.

I spoke with Mr. O'Hara, and he consents to this request.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Christopher P. Flint Cooper Erving & Savage, LLP 39 North Pearl Street Albany, NY 12207 (518) 449-3900

Fax: (518) 432-3111

EXHIBIT J

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/26/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 36

STATE OF NEW YORK
SUPREME COURT CHAMBERS
WARREN COUNTY MUNICIPAL CENTER
1340 STATE ROUTE 9
LAKE GEORGE, NY 12845
(518) 480-6346
ChambersRMuller@nycourts.gov

JENNIFER P. JERAM Principal Law Clerk

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

ELAINE A. MADISON Secretary to Justice

November 16, 2022

Via NYSCEF and Email

JUSTICE

Christopher P. Flint, Esq.
Cooper Erving & Savage, LLP
39 N. Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12207
Email: @coopererving.com

Malcolm B. O'Hara, Esq. Bartlett Pontiff Stewart & Rhodes One Washington Street, P.O. Box 2168 Glens Falls, NY 12801 Email: @bpsrlaw.com

RE: Karen Minckler and Joseph Howell v D'Ella, Inc. d/b/a D'Ella Honda of Glens Falls, D'Ella Automotive, Inc. and Michael Swan, Warren County Treasurer, Administrator of the Estate of Thomas E. Shelly, III, Deceased Index No. EF2020-67770; RJI No. 56-1-2020-0290

Dear Counselors:

I am addressing a recusal request sought by Mr. Flint at his clients' direction and attach a copy of a letter from the Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee dated October 12, 2022. This correspondence was responsive to an enquiry concerning my ethical obligations based upon the facts summarized in the enclosure. I accept the subcommittee's guidance and decline the request for recusal.

There is a conference scheduled for November 28, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the Warren County Courthouse at which time pending motions will be discussed.

Respectfully

Supreme Court Justice

Attachment

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/25/2022 05:48 PM
NYSCEF DOC. NO. 56

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

JUDICIAL CAMPAIGN ETHICS SUBCOMMITTEE Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center 25 Beaver Street New York, New York 10004 1-888-600-JCEC (5232) jcec@nycourts.gov

Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics

Hon. Margaret T. Walsh Hon. Lillian Wan Co-Chairs

October 12, 2022

Judicial Campaign Ethics Center

Hon, James D. Pagones Subcommittee Chair

Hon. Emilio Colaiacovo Hon. Nelida Malave-Gonzalez Hon. James P. Murphy Subcommittee Members

Rosemary Garland-Scott, Esq. Executive Director Hon. Robert Muller Warren County Courthouse 1340 State Route 9 Lake George, NY 12845

Re: SC2022-048

Dear Judge Muller:

Thank you for your attached inquiry, dated October 7, 2022, to the Judicial Campaign Ethics Center ("JCEC"). The Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee (the "Subcommittee") has been delegated authority by the full Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics (the "Committee") to provide candidates for judicial office with prompt responses to campaign-related ethics questions. The Subcommittee believes that your inquiry involves campaign-related activity, and therefore has determined that it may provide a response in this matter.

You have stated that you are a Supreme Court Justice, 4th Judicial District, seeking re-election to your current seat. You have stated that in a matter before you, plaintiff's counsel requested your recusal because one of the defense counsel serves on your re-election campaign committee and that attorney's law firm sponsored a recent fundraiser on your behalf. You have further stated that you have "a substantial amount of public support from the legal community" in your judicial district and that if you were to automatically recuse it would eviscerate your calendar.

In a telephone conversation with staff counsel, you explained that defense counsel has no "active" role in your campaign and is merely one of approximately 30 persons listed on your campaign letterhead. You have also stated that defense counsel's law firm has held only a single fund-raiser on your behalf. You have asked for guidance as to your recusal obligations under the circumstances.

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FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/28/2022 05:48 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 38

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

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Accordingly, you are advised that you are disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving defense counsel and his law firm, including partners and associates, *during the course of your judicial campaign (see* Opinion 03-64). You are further advised that you do not have any <u>post-election</u> disqualification or disclosure obligation when defense counsel or his law firm appears, as their involvement in your campaign consisted of hosting a single fund-raising event on your behalf (see Opinions 12-164; 09-245; 03-64).

The Subcommittee notes that ordinarily you would not be disqualified from presiding over matters involving defense counsel by virtue of his name appearing on your campaign letterhead since such listing, without more, constitutes a very minimal level of involvement in your judicial campaign for which even disclosure is not required (*see* Opinion 09-245).

Reliance on this Opinion. Please be advised that provided that your conduct comports with the advice contained herein, such conduct will be presumed proper for purposes of any subsequent investigation by the Commission on Judicial Conduct. You are further advised that this response provided by the Subcommittee, and the resulting presumption of propriety, applies only to you for conduct undertaken during your current window period. The presumption is expressly conditioned on the correctness and completeness of the facts supplied in your attached inquiry.

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For Further Assistance. The <u>amended rules</u> and a copy of <u>the Judicial</u> <u>Campaign Ethics Handbook</u> are also available on <u>our web site</u>. For further assistance on this or any other campaign-related ethics matter, please do not hesitate to <u>contact us</u>.

Very truly yours,

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 11/28/2022 05:48 PM

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 56 RECEIVED NYSCEF: 11/26/2022

Hon. James D. Pagones (ret.) Subcommittee Chair

Att.

4 of 4

EXHIBIT K

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 01/20/2023 05:25 RM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 83

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 01/04/2023 01:12 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 80

STATE OF NEW YORK

SUPREME COURT CHAMBERS

WARREN COUNTY MUNICIPAL CENTER

1340 STATE ROUTE 9

LAKE GEORGE, NY 12845

(518) 480-6346 ChambersRMuller@nycourts.gov

January 4, 2023

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 01/20/2023

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 01/04/2023

JENNIFER P. JERAM Principal Law Clerk

ELAINE A. MADISON Secretary to Justice

VIA NYSCEF AND EMAIL

ROBERT I. MULLER

JUSTICE

Christopher P. Flint, Esq. Cooper Erving & Savage LLP 39 North Pearl Street Albany, New York 12207 Email: @coopererving.com

Malcolm B. O'Hara, Esq. Bartlett, Pontiff, Stewart & Rhodes, P.C. P.O. Box 2168, One Washington Street Glens Falls, New York 12801 Email: _____@bpsrlaw.com

Kenneth L. Bobrow, Esq. Felt Evans, LLP 4-6 North Park Row Clinton, New York 13323 Email: @felt-evans.com

RE: Minckler et al. v D'Ella, Inc. et al. Index No. EF2020-67770

RJI No. 56-1-2020-0290

Dear Counselors:

Before the Court in the above-referenced matter is plaintiff's motion for recusal by Notice of Motion electronically filed on November 23, 2022. The Court has considered NYSCEF document Nos. 61 through 76 and Judicial Campaign Ethics Subcommittee Opinion SC2022-048, dated October 12, 2022. Based upon the forgoing the motion for recusal is denied.

Also before the Court is a Notice of Motion to strike the Note of Issue electronically filed on October 14, 2022 and a Cross Motion to prohibit defendants from proceeding with a medical examination of plaintiff electronically filed on November 21, 2022. Oral argument relative to this Motion and Cross Motion has been scheduled for **January 13, 2023 at 9:30 A.M.**, with personal appearances expected at that time.

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 01/20/2023 05:25 RM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 87

FILED: WARREN COUNTY CLERK 01/04/2023 01:12 PM

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 80

INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 01/20/2023
INDEX NO. EF2020-67770

RECEIVED NYSCEF: 01/04/2023

Hon. Robert J. Muller January 4, 2023 Page 2 of 2

The trial previously scheduled for January 23, 2023 at 9:30 A.M. is hereby adjourned pending disposition of the Motion and Cross Motion.

It is SO ORDERED.

01/04/2023

11 116

Supreme Court Justice

Samual Voque

EXHIBIT L

State of New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division Third Judicial Department

Decided and Entered: January 4, 2024	CV-23-0280
KAREN MINCKLER et al., Appellants,	
D'ELLA, INC., Doing Business as D'ELLA HONDA OF GLENS FALLS, et al., Respondents, et al., Defendant.	MEMORANDUM AND ORDER
Calendar Date: November 20, 2023	
Before: Clark, J.P., Aarons, Reynolds Fitzge	erald, McShan and Mackey, JJ.
Cooper Erving & Savage LLP, Albany appellants.	y (Christopher P. Flint of counsel), for
Bartlett, Pontiff, Stewart & Rhodes, P counsel), for respondents.	C, Glens Falls (Malcolm B. O'Hara of

Clark, J.P.

Appeal from an order of the Supreme Court (Robert J. Muller, J.), entered January 4, 2023 in Warren County, which denied plaintiffs' motion for recusal.

The underlying action arises from an automobile accident that occurred in 2019 when plaintiff driver Karen Minckler suffered physical injuries. Minckler and her spouse, derivatively, commenced this action against, as is relevant here, defendants D'Ella Inc.,

doing business as D'Ella Honda of Glens Falls, and D'Ella Automotive Inc. (hereinafter collectively referred to as defendants), the owners of the other vehicle involved in the collision. Initially, the matter was assigned to Justice Martin D. Auffredou. However, Justice Affredou recused himself after disclosing that defense counsel had served as the chair of his campaign committee in 2015, and the matter was reassigned to Justice Robert J. Muller.

In September 2022, plaintiffs learned that defense counsel and his law firm were supporting Justice Muller's reelection campaign by hosting an upcoming fundraising event for him. On October 3, 2022, during a phone conference with Justice Muller, plaintiffs, through their attorney, requested that Justice Muller recuse himself. Justice Muller asked that the request be put in writing on notice to defense counsel. The next day, plaintiffs emailed a request for recusal, and defendants opposed the request. Two days later, Justice Muller's principal law clerk emailed the parties advising them that Justice Miller had submitted an inquiry about the recusal issue to the Judicial Campaign Ethics Center (hereinafter the JCEC) and asking the parties to hold any motion practice in abeyance until a response was received. On October 14, 2022, defendants filed a motion to strike the note of issue and/or for an independent medical examination, which was held in abeyance on consent while the parties waited to hear from Justice Muller on the recusal issue. On November 16, 2022, Justice Muller issued a letter indicating that he would not recuse and attached an October 12, 2022 letter from the JCEC. On November 23, 2022, plaintiffs filed a formal motion seeking Justice Muller's recusal, which motion was denied on January 4, 2023. Plaintiffs appeal from that order.

A judge is prohibited from participating in any matter in which he or she is interested or has a familial relationship with any party (*see* Judiciary Law § 14). Where disqualification is not required pursuant to Judiciary Law § 14, "a judge's decision on a recusal motion is one of discretion, and when recusal is sought based upon impropriety as distinguished from legal disqualification, the judge is the sole arbiter" (*McAuliffe v McAuliffe*, 209 AD3d 1119, 1120 [3d Dept 2022] [internal quotation marks and citations omitted]). However, that discretion is not unlimited, and "judges must still recuse in cases where their impartiality 'might be reasonably questioned' " (Advisory Comm on Jud Ethics Op 19-76 [2019], quoting Rules Governing Jud Conduct [22 NYCRR] § 100.3 [E] [1]). Judges have an obligation to comport themselves within the bounds of judicial ethics and must avoid the appearance of impropriety at all times, particularly when running for election or reelection (*see* Rules Governing Jud Conduct [22 NYCRR] §§ 100.2; 100.3 [E]; *Concord Assoc., L.P. v EPT Concord, LLC*, 130 AD3d 1404, 1405-1406 [3d Dept 2015], *lv denied* 26 NY3d 912 [2015]). It is axiomatic that attorneys often assist judges

with their campaigns as lawyers often have contact with judges and can express opinions about their fitness to be judges. When an attorney who is assisting in a judge's campaign appears before that judge, the judge has a duty to disclose to the parties the nature and level of that attorney's involvement (*see* Advisory Comm on Jud Ethics Op 07-26 [2007]). Although the relationship between lawyers and judges can result in the judge's recusal during and after a campaign (*see* Advisory Comm on Jud Ethics Op 08-152 [2008]), an attorney's attendance at a single campaign event will not require the judge's recusal; recusal is only required where the attorney plays an active role in the judge's campaign (*see* Advisory Comm on Jud Ethics Op 09-245 [2010]).

Here, Justice Muller did not disclose to the parties that defense counsel and his law firm were providing assistance to his judicial campaign. Plaintiffs independently learned of the fundraiser, prompting them to raise the issue and seek the judge's recusal. The record establishes that the law firm hosted a fundraising event for Justice Muller, that the names of defense counsel and five other attorneys from his firm appeared as supporters on Justice Muller's campaign website and that defense counsel wrote a favorable opinion letter endorsing Justice Muller's candidacy which appeared in several news publications throughout the Fourth Judicial District. Furthermore, the JCEC's October 12, 2022 letter clearly states that Justice Muller was "disqualified, subject to remittal, from presiding over matters involving defense counsel and his law firm, including partners and associates, during the course of [his] judicial campaign" (emphasis omitted). Although we have no way of knowing Justice Muller's reasons or intentions, it is undisputed that he did not disclose the JCEC letter to the parties until a month after receiving it, when his campaign results became official, and he was elected to a new term of office. As judges need to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, Justice Muller should have disclosed the JCEC letter upon receipt and recused from the matter as soon as possible (see Rules Governing Jud Conduct [22 NYCRR] §100.3 [E] [1]; Advisory Comm on Jud Ethics Op 03-64 [2003]). Therefore, Justice Muller abused his discretion in denying plaintiffs' motion for recusal.

Reynolds Fitzgerald, McShan and Mackey, JJ., concur; Aarons, J., not taking part.

ORDERED that the order is reversed, on the law, without costs, motion granted, and matter remitted to the Supreme Court for further proceedings not inconsistent with this Court's decision before a different judge.

ENTER:

Robert D. Mayberger Clerk of the Court

Schedule 1

Index No.	Case Name	Law Firm(s) Involved (party represented)
EF2020- 68040	Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC v Queensbury Town Board of Assessors et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69246	Bridgestone Retail Operations, LLC v Queensbury Town Board of Assessors et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69663	Dorn, Adam et al. v Town of Chester Zoning Board of Appeals et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for petitioners)
	ei ai.	McPhillips, Fitzgerald & Cullum LLP (for a respondent)
EF2022- 70005	Darrell R. Durfee et al. v Adam J. Gersten	Bartlett Pontiff (for plaintiffs)
EF2019- 66956	Forest Lake Properties, Inc. v Town of Warrensburg et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69230	James Street LLC v Town of Lake George Board of Assessment Review et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a respondent/intervenor)
EF2020- 68009	Medline Industries Inc. v The Assessors for the City of Glens Falls et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents)
EF2021- 69272	Medline Industries Inc. v The Assessors for the City of Glens Falls et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents)
EF2022- 70325	Nims Properties LLC et al. v Board of Assessment Review and Assessor of the City of Glens Falls et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents)

EF2020- 68118	93 Maple LLC v Board of Assessors and Board of Assessment Review of the City of Glens Falls	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69241	93 Maple LLC v Board of Assessors and Board of Assessment Review of the City of Glens Falls	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents and respondent/intervenor)
65193	Northern Hospitality Mgmt, LLC v The Quarters at Four Season Inn Condominium Assoc. et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for plaintiff)
EF2019- 67013	Pregis Innovative Packaging LLC v Queensbury Town of Assessor et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2020- 68012	Pregis Innovative Packaging LLC v Queensbury Town of Assessor et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2019- 66787	Rainbow Beach Assoc. v Samuel P. Hoopes III et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for defendants)
EF2021- 69238	Rite Aid Corp v Assessor and the Board of Assessment Review of the City of Glens Falls et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents)
EF2021- 69249	The Roberts Gardens North Partnership v Board of Assessment Review of Queensbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2022- 70327	The Roberts Gardens North Partnership v Board of Assessment Review of Queensbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69223	Tree Care by Stan Hunt, Inc. et al. v Board of Assessment Review of Queensbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)

EF2022- 70337	Tree Care by Stan Hunt, Inc. et al. v Board of Assessment Review of Queensbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2021- 69433	The Triple F. Club, Inc. v Craig Gibney et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondents)
EF2022- 70353	Wal-Mart Real Estate Trust v Board of Assessment Review of the Town of Queensbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EF2022- 70528	Whispering Pines Assoc., LLC et al. v Town of Queensbury Planning Board et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a respondent)
EF2020- 68253	John D. Wright v Williams et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for a defendant)
EC2021- 33122	Nims Properties, LLC et al. v Board of Assessment Review of Kingsbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EC2022- 34172	Nims Properties, LLC et al. v Board of Assessment Review of Kingsbury et al.	Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EC2021- 32953	Randy Wilson v Eugene Williams, Jr.	Bartlett Pontiff (for plaintiff)
EF2022- 70232	Martin M. Filler et al. v Nicholas Cutro, Jr.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for counterclaim/crossclaim defendant)
EF2022- 70356	206 Glen Street LLC v Assessor of the City of Glens Falls et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
EF2022- 70357	Union Square Properties LLC v Assessor of the City of Glens Falls et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)

EF2022- 34236	Margaret Allen LE et al. v Assessor of the Town of Jackson et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioners)
EC2021- 33106	Allenstbizpk LLC v Assessor of the Town of Fort Edward et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
		Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EC2022- 34196	Allenstbizpk LLC v Assessor of the Town of Fort Edward et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
		Bartlett Pontiff (for respondent/intervenor)
EC2022- 34382	George G. Gellert v Vertical Farms Equine LLC et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
EC2022- 34129	George g. Gellert v Nicholas Curto, Jr. et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
EC2022- 34043	George g. Gellert v Nicholas Curto, Jr. et al.	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for petitioner)
EC2021- 32898	New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Assoc., Inc. v Patrick Brockway	E. Stewart Jones Hacker Murphy LLP (for defendant)
EF2021- 68657	Brittany Rivers v Susan E. Bradford, M.D. et al.	McPhillips, Fitzgerald, & Cullum LLP (for defendants)
EC2020- 31343	Wiley Sutphin v Bernice Mennis et al.	Maguire Cardona, P.C. (for defendants)