


**BOARD OF ETHICS
OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

J. Shane Creamer, Jr.
Executive Director
Board of Ethics
of the City of Philadelphia
1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

v.

Celena Morrison


Respondent.

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: **Matter No: 2106ET19**

STATUS REPORT

Celena Morrison (“Ms. Morrison”), by and through her attorneys, Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti, LLP, and pursuant to the September 17, 2021 Order of Hearing Officer Louis S. Rulli, submits this Status Report.

A. Status of Settlement Discussions

Counsel for the Board of Ethics and Ms. Morrison spoke on Monday, September 20, 2021. Counsel had a subsequent call with Michael Cooke on Tuesday, September 21, 2021. Despite some progress during these discussions, the parties were not able to reach a settlement agreement.

B. Responses to Questions of the Hearing Officer

Ms. Morrison provides the following responses to the questions posed by Hearing Officer Rulli in his September 17, 2021 Order.

1. Identify and describe any differences between you and your opposing counsel regarding material facts that you believe present a barrier to resolving this matter.

While the parties have discussed Ms. Morrison's position generally, Ms. Morrison has not yet submitted her Answer to the Executive Director's Amended Notice of Administrative Enforcement. For purposes of this submission, in summary, while acknowledging that she accepted a loan from Kendall Stephens, Ms. Morrison denies that she "solicited" that loan or that Ms. Kendall offered her the loan due to her role with the City. Ms. Stephens was a long-time friend whom Ms. Morrison was living with in an attempt to escape [REDACTED]. Ms. Stephens offered Ms. Morrison the funds to enable her to move out of that [REDACTED] home. Ms. Stephens advised Ms. Morrison that she had funds available to provide the loan. Ms. Stephens made the offer prior to the physical attack referenced in the Charge. Moreover, while Ms. Morrison acknowledges that she took steps to assist Ms. Stephens after the attack, she would have taken the same steps for anyone in her community.

2. Identify and describe any differences between you and your opposing counsel regarding the application of governing law that you believe present a barrier to resolving this matter.

Counsel for the Board of Ethics alleges that by "soliciting, accepting, and receiving a \$4,000 no-interest loan from Ms. Stephens, Ms. Morrison violated Philadelphia Code § 20-604(1)."

Counsel for the Board of Ethics further alleges that Ms. Morrison "acted knowingly, that is voluntarily and intentionally, and not because of mistake or accident when she requested, accepted, and received the monetary no- interest loan from Ms. Stephens" and that "[h]er knowing action is an aggravating factor under Philadelphia Code Section 20-1302(1)(b)(i)."

A violation of Philadelphia Code Section 20-604(1) is subject to a civil penalty of \$1,000, which may be increased to \$2,000 if an aggravating factor is present. See Code §§ 20-612(1); 20-1302.

While Ms. Morrison would agree to having violated Philadelphia Code Section 20-604(1), Ms. Morrison will not agree to a settlement that requires, directly or indirectly, that she acknowledge having acted “knowingly” in doing so.

3. Identify and describe any differences between you and your opposing counsel regarding the legal requirements of a settlement that you believe present a barrier to resolving this matter. Specifically, counsel should identify any settlement terms that they believe must be either included or excluded for a settlement agreement to be legally sufficient to obtain Board approval to the extent that such terms may present a barrier to settlement.

Mr. Cooke kindly answered our questions regarding the legal requirements of a settlement.

We do not believe there are differences in understanding as to those requirements.

Dated: September 24, 2021

Respectfully, submitted

/s/ Gaetan J. Alfano
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that a true and correct copy of the above-captioned Status Report was served upon the following as indicated:

By Email

Hearing Officer

Professor Louis Rulli
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Date: September 24, 2021

/s/ Gaetan J. Alfano
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