

**BEFORE THE
MISSOURI ETHICS COMMISSION**

Filed
FEB 5 2024
Missouri Ethics
Commission

MISSOURI ETHICS)	
COMMISSION,)	
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	Case No. 23-0001-I
v.)	
)	
SHARON RIPPERGER,)	
Former Alderman for City of Reeds)	
Springs,)	
)	
Respondent.)	

**JOINT FINDINGS OF FACT,
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND ORDER**

The Missouri Ethics Commission (“MEC”), together with Sharon Ripperger (“Respondent”), collectively the “parties” jointly stipulate and consent to action as set forth here (the “agreement”).

Respondent acknowledges her right to have this agreement reviewed by counsel. Respondent further acknowledges he has received actual notice of the legal complaint filed by the MEC in this case, have reviewed the contents of the Complaint, and submit to the jurisdiction of the Missouri Ethics Commission.

Respondent further acknowledges she is aware of the various rights and privileges afforded by law, including but not limited to: the right to appear and be represented by counsel at a hearing before the MEC; the right to have all

allegations against Respondent proven upon the record by competent and substantial evidence; the right to cross-examine any witnesses appearing at the hearing against Respondent; the right to present evidence on Respondent's behalf at the hearing; and the right to a decision upon the record of the hearing. Being aware of these rights, Respondent knowingly and voluntarily waives each one of these rights and freely enters into this agreement and agrees to abide by its terms.

I.

The parties mutually agree and stipulate, subject to adoption by the Missouri Ethics Commission, the following shall constitute the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law in this matter:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. At all relevant times, Respondent Sharon Ripperger was Alderman of Reeds Spring, MO.
2. Ace's Antiques & Collectibles Emporium Inc. is a corporation registered with the Missouri Secretary of State on October 16, 2012 located at 22232 Main Street, Reeds Spring, MO.
3. At all relevant times, Respondent Ripperger was the president of Ace's Antiques & Collectibles Emporium Inc. and sole member of the board of directors.

4. Pursuant to § 105.961, RSMo, the MEC's staff investigated a complaint filed with the Commission and reported the investigation findings to the Commission.

5. Based upon the investigation report, the Commission determined there were reasonable grounds to believe violations of the law occurred and authorized a hearing pursuant to § 105.961.3, RSMo.

6. On or about August 20, 2022, 22232 Main St., Reeds Spring, MO was scheduled for auction.

7. On or about August 21, 2022, a special closed session of the board of aldermen for the City of Reeds Springs was called, during which the board discussed the city's purchase of the property and approved the purchase of 22232 Main St., Reeds Spring, MO for \$85,000.

8. The City of Reeds Spring did not give public notice of its intent to purchase the property at 22232 Main St., Reeds Spring, MO.

9. On or about October 14, 2022, Respondent Ripperger, on behalf of Ace's Antiques & Collectables Emporium, Inc., signed a warranty deed granting the property located at 22232 Main St., Reeds Spring, MO to the City of Reeds Spring, MO.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

10. Pursuant to Section 105.458.2(2), RSMo, "No sole proprietorship, partnership, joint venture, or corporation in which any member of any

legislative body of any political subdivision is the sole proprietor, a partner having more than a ten percent partnership interest, or a coparticipant or owner of in excess of ten percent of the outstanding shares of any class of stock, shall:

(2) Sell, rent or lease any property to the political subdivision or any agency of the political subdivision where the consideration is in excess of five hundred dollars per transaction or five thousand dollars per annum, or in the case of a school board five thousand dollars per annum, unless the transaction is made pursuant to an award on a contract let or a sale made after public notice and in the case of property other than real property, competitive bidding, provided that the bid or offer accepted is the lowest received.

11. There is probable cause to believe that Respondent violated § 105.458.2(2), RSMo, by selling real property in excess of \$500 to the City of Reeds Springs without the City of Reeds Spring giving public notice.

II.

Based on the foregoing, the parties mutually agree and stipulate, subject to adoption by the Missouri Ethics Commission, the following shall constitute the Order issued by the Missouri Ethics Commission in this matter:

CONSENT ORDER

The Missouri Ethics Commission finds probable cause to believe Respondent violated § 105.458.2(2), and pursuant to § 105.961.4, hereby **ORDERS:**

1. Respondents shall comply with all relevant sections of Chapters 105;

2. It is the order of the Missouri Ethics Commission that a fee is imposed against Respondents in the amount of \$8,500.00, pursuant to Section 105.961.4(6), RSMo. However, if Respondents pay \$850.00 within forty-five days after the date of the Consent Order, the remainder of the fee will be stayed. The fee will be paid by check or money order made payable to the Missouri Ethics Commission.
3. Regardless of the stay in paragraph 2 above, if there is probable cause to believe that any Respondent commits any further violation of the campaign finance laws under Chapter 105 or 130, RSMo, within the two-year period from the date of this order, then the Respondent who committed the violation will be required to pay the remainder of the fees. The fee will be due immediately upon final adjudication finding that there was probable cause to believe that such Respondent has committed such a violation.

III.

1. The parties understand the Missouri Ethics Commission will maintain this agreement as an open record of the Commission.

2. This agreement does not bind the Missouri Ethics Commission or restrict the remedies available concerning any violations not expressly detailed here, including any future violations.

3. Each party agrees to pay all of their own fees and expenses incurred as a result of this case, its litigation, and/or its disposition.

4. Respondents, together with their heirs, assigns, agents, representatives and attorneys, do hereby waive, release, acquit and forever discharge the Missouri Ethics Commission, the Commission's respective members, employees, agents and attorneys including former members, employees, agents and attorneys, of, or from any liability, claim, actions,

causes of action, fees, costs, expenses and compensation, including, but not limited to, any claim for attorney's fees and expenses, whether or not now known or contemplated, including, but not limited to, any claims pursuant to Section 536.087, RSMo, as amended, or any claim arising under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, which now or in the future may be based upon, arise out of, or relate to any of the matters raised in this case or its litigation or from the negotiation or execution of this Joint Stipulation. The parties acknowledge that this paragraph is severable from the remaining portions of this agreement in that it survives in perpetuity even in the event that any court or administrative tribunal deems this agreement or any portion thereof void or unenforceable.

5. This agreement shall become effective immediately upon (1) the signature of all parties; (2) adoption of the Joint Proposed Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law by the Missouri Ethics Commission; and (3) issuance of a Final Order by the Commission, without any further action of the parties.

SO AGREED:

RESPONDENT SHARON
RIPERGER

Sharon Ripperger 2-5-24
Sharon Ripperger Date

MISSOURI ETHICS COMMISSION

Elizabeth L. Ziegler 2-5-24
Elizabeth L. Ziegler Date
Executive Director

~~Brian Hamilton 2/5/24~~
~~Brian Hamilton Date~~
Attorney for Petitioner

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3. Regardless of the stay in paragraph 2 above, if there is probable cause to believe that Respondent committed any further violation of Chapter 105, RSMo, within the two-year period from the date of this order, then Respondent will be required to pay the remainder of the fees. The fee will be due immediately upon final adjudication finding that there was probable cause to believe that Respondent has committed such a violation.

SO ORDERED this 6TH day of February, 2024



Robert Cook, Chair
Missouri Ethics Commission