BEFORE THE WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION
PROBABLE CAUSE REVIEW BOARD

WEST VIRGINIA ETHICS COMMISSION,
Complainant,

v.

CIC 2014-014

EUGENE R. THORN,
Former Employee of the West Virginia Wildlife Center,
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources,
Respondent.

PROBABLE CAUSE ORDER

On this date, the Probable Cause Review Board, having investigated and
considered the allegations set forth in Commission Initiated Complaint ("CIC") 2014-
014, unanimously finds that there is probable cause to believe that Respondent Eugene
R. Thorn violated the provisions of the Ethics Act as follows:

Count One: Respondent Thorn had a prohibited interest in the profits or benefits
of a contract over which his public position gave him control in violation of W.Va. Code §
6B-2-5(d)(1). The contract was between Ulrika M. Browning ("Browning") and the
Division of Natural Resources for the operation of the Wildlife Center gift shop, snack
bar and admission booth. Prior to the contract, Respondent's wife, Sandra Thorn, and
Browning had agreed to share the net profits from the operation of the gift shop in
exchange for Sandra Thorn working at the gift shop.
**Count Two:** Sandra Thorn had a financial interest in Browning’s contract because Sandra Thorn either loaned $5,000 to or invested it in Browning’s business endeavor at the gift shop to pay for a surety bond required by the contract. Due to Respondent’s financial interest in the contract and participation in the contract on behalf of the Division of Natural Resources, he was in violation of W.Va. Code § 6B-2-5(d).

**Count Three:** The Respondent used his public position for his and his wife’s private gain to influence Ulrika M. Browning to immediately repay the $5,000 loan or investment with 18 percent interest in violation of W.Va. Code § 6B-2-5(b)(1).

In accordance with W.Va. Code § 6B-2-4(f), the Commission staff is hereby ORDERED to prepare a Statement of Charges and to schedule this matter for a public hearing to determine the truth or falsity of the charges.

Date Entered: April 25, 2016

James E. Shepherd, II, Chairperson
Probable Cause Review Board

Michael A. Kawash, Member
Probable Cause Review Board

Daniel J. Guida, Member
Probable Cause Review Board