

**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:

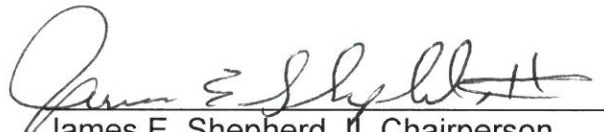
Count One: Respondent Thorn had a prohibited interest in the profits or benefits of a contract over which his public position gave him control in violation of W.Va. Code § 6B-2-5(d)(1). The contract was between Ulrika M. Browning (“Browning”) and the Division of Natural Resources for the operation of 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.

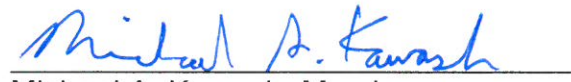
Count Two: Sandra Thorn had a financial interest in Browning's contract because Sandra Thorn either loaned \$5,000 to or invested it in Browning's business endeavor at the gift shop to pay for a surety bond required by the contract. Due to Respondent's financial interest in the contract and participation in the contract on behalf of the Division of Natural Resources, he was in violation of W.Va. Code § 6B-2-5(d).

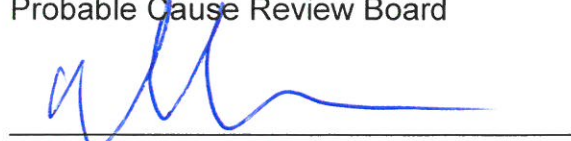
Count Three: The Respondent used his public position for his and his wife's private gain to influence Ulrika M. Browning to immediately repay the \$5,000 loan or investment with 18 percent interest in violation of W.Va. Code § 6B-2-5(b)(1).

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