

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by Molly Spino, Torrington
In re. Commission Initiated: Chris Diorio for State Representative

File No. 2016-080
File No. 2016-102NT

FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Complainant Molly Spino of Torrington filed this Complaint pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 9-7b alleging that the candidate, Christopher Diorio, had failed to turn over all of the contributions that he had collected in 2016 when he was running for state senate. For a time, Spino was the treasurer of Diorio's candidate committee. After Spino resigned as treasurer, Diorio failed to appoint a new treasurer for the committee that prompted the initiation of second matter by the Commission. After investigating the allegations raised in the complaint the Commission makes the following findings and conclusions:

1. Christopher R. Diorio registered a candidate committee to run for the 65th General Assembly seat in the 2016 election cycle on May 23, 2016. He named Molly Spino as treasurer and Wendy Traub as deputy treasurer.
2. On September 21, 2016, Traub resigned as deputy treasurer. On September 28, 2016, Spino resigned as treasurer.
3. On October 6, 2016, Spino filed this complaint, alleging that she believed the candidate, Diorio, had failed to turn over to her contributions that he had collected to support his candidacy. She stated in her sworn complaint that she believed he may have collected as much as \$3,000 in contributions.
4. Based on documents provided by the complainant as well as information gleaned from additional investigation, it appears that Respondent Diorio may have received contributions that another individual, Bruce Harrison, had collected from some contacts.
5. Those six contributions totaled between \$25 and \$35 and were all in cash. The uncertainty about the total stems from statements from Harrison, who wrote the total "might be 10 dollars off, because I honestly can't remember if my wife and I donated."
6. The Commission's investigation reflects that Harrison gave contributions that he had collected to Diorio, who turned them into Spino. The treasurer, Spino, stated that the contributions that she received from Diorio were not deposited into the committee's bank account, but ultimately were returned to Harrison who gave the money back to the original contributors.

7. Two of the contributions, however, were not returned to the original contributors. Contributions from Bruce Harrison and Elaine Harrison, parents of contribution solicitor Bruce Harrison, were not returned. It is unclear from the documentation as well as the evidence gathered through the investigation if they ever actually finalized the contributions to the committee at all. Spino stated that she received neither the cash contributions nor the qualified contribution certification cards from the Harrisons.
8. Diorio stated that he received some contributions from Harrison and that he turned the certification cards and the cash he had received in to Spino. Diorio also stated that some of the contributions that Harrison collected consisted only of certification cards and that money was not included with the contributions so he did not turn those over to the treasurer.¹ He did not, however, specify which of the contributions he turned over to Spino.
9. Spino stated that she only knew² of two contributions – from Bruce Harrison and Elaine Harrison – that solicitor Harrison gave to Diorio, which she, in turn, never received from the candidate.
10. On September 19, 2016, the Commission received a letter from Diorio, in which he announced that he was no longer seeking the 65th district seat in the Connecticut House of Representatives and that he relinquished the endorsement from the district Republicans, allowing them to endorse another candidate.

¹ Diorio wrote a response to the complaint that included the following explanation:

Mr. Bruce Harrison was a member of my campaign staff and is a close friend. During my campaign, he turned over seven filled out contribution forms. Of those seven forms, four were delivered with monies attached. The other three came from friends or family and did not have any money included. The thought being that those three contributors who did not include the money with their forms could be easily found at a later date to receive the money. Of the four forms that did include money, they were for \$5 each. Admittedly, I do not recall the amount that was “pledged” on the other forms, but ultimately no money was gathered. All four forms and the total sum of \$20 was turned over to Molly Spino on September 17th, 2016 during our final meeting. As the other three forms did not include any financial contribution, I did not turn them over. All other contributions made to the campaign were received by Molly or other members of my staff. Any offers made personally to me for campaign contributions from friends and family were rejected.

² Spino alleged in her complaint that Diorio stated in a campaign meeting that he had raised approximately \$3,000 in contributions. He did not turn those contributions in to her, which led her to believe that he still had campaign contributions in his possession. Diorio stated to investigators that he had told campaign volunteers that he had raised \$3,000 in order to have them believe that he was working on his campaign even though he was actually working to secure a job in North Carolina, which he ultimately accepted and which required him to drop out of the race. In actuality, he told investigators, he had not personally collected any campaign contributions.


11. On September 30, 2016, the Commission wrote to Diorio notifying him that Spino had resigned as treasurer and that he continued to have an obligation to maintain the candidate committee until the committee was properly terminated under Connecticut state statutes.
12. That letter, which was sent via certified mail to Diorio at his Torrington address, was returned to the Commission on October 18, 2016, as unclaimed.
13. After his resignation from the 2016 election, Mr. Diorio moved to North Carolina, where he still lives.
14. Given the relatively small amounts of money that were collected and spent during the 2016 election cycle by the *Chris Diorio for State Representative* candidate committee and the absence of the candidate, who is the only respondent here, from the jurisdiction, the Commission will take no further action on this matter.

ORDER

The following Order is recommended on the basis of the aforementioned findings:

That no further action be taken on this matter and that this case will be closed.

Adopted this 5th day of February, 2020 at Hartford, Connecticut.



Commissioner
By Order of the Commission