

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by JR Romano,
Branford

File No. 2018-116

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Complainant JR Romano filed this complaint on November 29, 2018, pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7b, alleging that the William Haskell candidate committee had made impermissible expenditures that were not made to promote the candidate's election to office. After an investigation of the complaint, the Commission makes the following findings and conclusions:

1. Respondent William Haskell was a candidate for the office of state senator in 2018.
2. Respondent Haskell formed a candidate committee¹ and participated in the Citizens' Election Program.² Marjorie Cion, the committee treasurer, was also named a respondent in this matter. The candidate committee received a grant totaling \$96,320 from the Citizens' Election Fund on August 21, 2018.³
3. Complainant alleged that the Haskell candidate committee paid Haskell's roommate, Jack Lynch, on numerous occasions for services rendered as committee worker for the Haskell election effort. "While Mr. Lynch is listed as a campaign consultant and has a right to be paid for services, the fact [that] the services and rent are essentially the same amount is suspect and warrants investigation."⁴ Lynch was also named as a respondent to this matter.
4. The Commission investigated the matter and found that the candidate committee entered into a contract with Lynch that took effect on April 6, 2018, and continued through November 6, 2018. Lynch received \$1,125 per month and provided services related to developing campaign data and opposition research; coordinating field operations; coordination; identifying and fostering political relationships; creating and devising content for digital and print outlets; administering campaign office; and managing day-to-day operations when candidate is not available. In addition, an amendment in October 2018,

¹ See SEEC Form 1 – Registration of Candidate Committee (*Will Haskell for CT*, Feb. 12, 2018) (reflecting establishment of candidate committee by William Haskell and appointment of Marjorie Cion as treasurer).

² See SEEC Form CEP 10 – Affidavit of Intent to Abide by Expenditure Limits and Other Citizens' Election Program Requirements (*Will Haskell for CT*, June 20, 2018) (reflecting intent of candidate and treasurer to participate in Citizens' Election Program and follow voluntary program rules).

³ See SEEC Form 30 – Itemized Campaign Finance Disclosure Statement: October 10 Filing (*Will Haskell for CT*, Oct. 10, 2018) (reporting grant received from Citizens' Election Fund on Aug. 21, 2018).

⁴ Affidavit of Complaint, State Elections Enforcement Comm'n., (JR Romano, Rec'd Nov. 29, 2018) (alleging violations of General Statutes § 9-607(g) regarding permissible expenditures of candidate committee).

added additional duties of designing, planning, and implementing a “paid digital voter outreach strategy” for which he was paid \$2,000.

5. The Haskell candidate committee paid Lynch a total of \$9,870 for his work as a consultant during the course of the 2018 election cycle.
6. General Statutes § 9-607(g)(1)(A)(i) limits expenditures from a candidate committee to those “promoting . . . the nomination or election of the candidate who established the committee . . .”
7. Based on the contract executed by the candidate and Lynch as well as other evidence collected by the Commission that showed Lynch executing those duties assigned to him as a paid campaign consultant, there is nothing to support Complainant’s allegations that the payments to Lynch were “suspect” on the basis that no work was performed for the payments.
8. Qualified candidate committees are not permitted to make payments to candidates or their family members nor are they permitted to make payments to “defray the normal living expenses of the candidate.”⁵
9. In this matter, the Complainant did not allege that there was a familial relationship between Lynch and Haskell. Likewise, the Commission’s investigation did not reveal a familial relationship that would prevent Lynch from being paid by the candidate committee under the above-cited regulation.
10. Here, the expenditures paid by *Will Haskell for CT* to Lynch were for services rendered to the candidate committee by Lynch. There is nothing in the evidence presented by the Complainant or in the evidence collected through the Commission’s investigation to support the allegations that payments made by the Haskell candidate committee were made to pay for a portion of the rent paid by Haskell and Lynch for the apartment the two shared, instead of to pay Lynch for services rendered to the committee.
11. The Commission found no reason to believe that the funds paid to Lynch were paid for any other purpose than to promote Haskell’s election to the office of state senator, for which he had established his candidate committee.
12. The Commission shall dismiss this complaint.

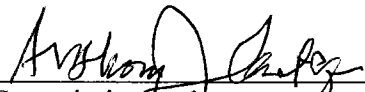
⁵ See Regulations of Conn. State Agencies, § 9-706-2 (b)(3) (imposing limits on payments by qualified candidate committees to candidates’ family members); General Statutes § 9-607(4) (prohibiting payments for “personal use” of candidate, including to defray candidate’s living expenses).

ORDER

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

That this complaint be dismissed.

Adopted this 6th day of November, 2019 at Hartford, Connecticut.


Commissioner *Anthony S. Castagno, Chair*
By Order of the Commission