

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by Gretchen A. Chipperini, Groton

File No. 2019-003

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Complainant filed the instant complaint with the Commission pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 9-7b. The Complaint alleged that the Respondent, polling place moderator Jeanie Rogers, violated election laws when she had the Complainant removed from outside the polling place. The following are the Commission's findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. Gretchen A. Chipperini ("Complainant"), was, at all times relevant hereto, an elector in the Town of Groton.
2. Complainant's assigned polling place for the November 6, 2018 general election was the Mary Morrison Elementary School in the Town of Groton.
3. On November 6, 2018, Complainant cast a vote in the November 6, 2018 general election at the Mary Morrison Elementary School polling location.
4. Jeanie Rogers ("Respondent") was the Head Moderator of the Mary Morrison Elementary School polling location on November 6, 2018.
5. Respondent was certified as a polling place moderator on June 16, 2018.
6. Complainant alleges that on November 6, 2018, Respondent "removed me from outside the polling place at Mary Morrison school by threatening to call the police to have me removed."¹

¹ In her complaint, Complainant specifically references General Statutes § 9-355, which provides:

Any person who, without reasonable cause, neglects to perform any of the duties required of him by the laws relating to elections or primaries and for which neglect no other punishment is provided, and any person who is guilty of fraud in the performance of any such duty, and any person who makes any unlawful alteration in any list required by law, shall be fined not more than three hundred dollars or be imprisoned not more than one year or be both fined and imprisoned. Any official who is convicted of fraud in the performance of any duty imposed upon him by any law relating to the registration or admission of electors or to the conduct of any election shall be disfranchised. Any public officer or any election official upon whom any duty is imposed by part I of chapter 147 and sections 9-308 to 9-311, inclusive, who wilfully omits or neglects to perform any such duty or does any act prohibited therein for which punishment is not otherwise provided shall be guilty of a class E felony.

7. When Respondent was contacted by Commission investigators, she stated that, during Election Day on November 6, 2018, she had received multiple complaints concerning the conduct of Complainant outside the Mary Morrison Elementary School polling location, including that she was blocking voters from entering the polling location, and being excessively loud.
8. Respondent states that after she had received multiple complaints about the conduct of Complainant, she went outside and requested that Complainant not block the entrance to the polling place and keep it down. When the Complainant allegedly “gave her a hard time” Respondent states that she told complainant that if she had to come out again, she would ask her to leave.
9. Respondent then states that, she received further complaints that Complainant was blocking the entrance to the polling place. Respondent states that, at that point, she contacted the Registrar of Voters instructed her to speak with the Respondent and ask her to leave because she was disrupting the process of voting.
10. Respondent states that, after she spoke with the Registrar of Voters, she went outside and requested that Complainant leave the polling location. Respondent states that Complainant refused to leave unless she called the police. Complainant states that, at that point, she did call the police.
11. Respondent states that by the time the police arrived, Complainant was packing up her things and preparing to leave.
12. Respondent provided Commission investigators with copies of the Moderator’s Diary for the Mary Morrison Elementary School polling location for November 6, 2018 (“Diary”). The Diary includes the following entries:

4:20 Kristin called to ask me to go outside to talk to Gretchen who was causing a problem to voters. I asked her nicely to just tone down. “All she is doing is yelling vote yes on question 3” while I observed. – She could have been doing more when I was not out there. I told her if I have to come out again then I’m going to ask her to leave. Said she has a freedom of speech and if she’s asked to leave, she will call the police. I reported back to Kristen

6:25 p.m. A volunteer from outside came in for a count and complained Gretchen was on the stairs blocking voters

and being obnoxious to voters telling them to vote yes. I relayed this to Kristen who said go outside and ask her to leave and if she doesn't to call police. I went out w/ Danielle. Gretchen stated she was not leaving – she was doing nothing wrong and to go ahead and call. She stated she would report me to the Sec. of State and Registrars. While I called Police and was on the phone w/ them, she got in the car and drove away). Police arrived Danielle and I recounted the incident to them. 7:00 p.m.

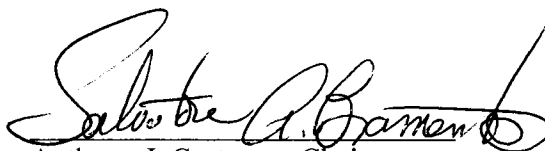
13. Commission investigators contacted the Groton Police, who indicated that they had no record of the event, but that it was most likely just treated as a routine call especially since the situation was resolved before they arrived on scene.
14. Commission investigators further attempted to contact other individuals that may have witnessed the events in question to no avail.
15. Based on the foregoing, the allegation that Respondent's actions violated the Elections Laws of the State of Connecticut is not supported by the evidence collected in this investigation.
16. Accordingly, this matter should be dismissed.

ORDER

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

That this matter be dismissed.

Adopted this 4 day of December, 2019 at Hartford, Connecticut.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Salvatore A. Bramante". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping tail.

~~Anthony J. Castagno, Chairperson~~

By Order of the Commission

Salvatore A. Bramante