

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by Robert Natt,
Easton

File No. 2021-196

COMMISSION DECISION

This complaint was received November 12, 2021. Commission staff docketed this complaint on November 15, 2021. The Commission has one year from the date that it received the complaint to resolve the matter. The deadline to resolve this matter was November 12, 2022. The Commission as detailed herein dismisses this matter by motion and order of the Commission pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7a¹, as detailed herein.

1. Complainant Robert Natt filed this complaint on November 12, 2021, alleging that the Citizens for Responsible Government had failed to follow Connecticut's campaign finance laws. Complainant named treasurer, June Logie, and president, Sherry Harris, as respondents in this matter.
2. Complainant alleged that Citizens for Responsible Government had failed to include proper disclaimers on mailers; failed to file required campaign finance disclosure reports; and had potentially accepted impermissible or excessive contributions related to contributions received through GoFundMe and had failed to include contributor information on certain contributions.
3. The Commission docketed this matter and investigated the allegations raised in the complaint.
4. Treasurers have numerous duties and obligations imposed upon them by chapter 155 of the General Statutes. *See generally* General Statutes § 9-606, et seq.

¹ Pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7a (g) (1), " ... if the commission does not, by one year following receipt of such complaint, issue a decision thereon, the commission shall dismiss such complaint, provided the length of time of any delay caused by (i) the commission or commission staff granting any extension or continuance to a respondent prior to the issuance of any such decision, (ii) any subpoena issued in connection with such complaint, (iii) any litigation in state or federal court related to such complaint, or (iv) any investigation by, or consultation of the commission or commission staff with, the Chief State's Attorney, the Attorney General, the United States Department of Justice or the United States Attorney for Connecticut related to such complaint, shall be added to such one year (emphasis added).⁷ Accordingly, the Commission determines "resolved by dates" by calculating one year from the receipt of the complaint, as augmented by any statutorily appropriate extensions or continuances.

5. General Statutes § 9-606 (a) requires a treasurer, among other things, to report all contributions and expenditures as specified in section 9-608 on periodic campaign finance disclosure statements and to keep internal records of each entry made on those statements.
6. General Statutes § 9-607 (f) requires a treasurer to preserve all internal records of transactions filed on campaign finance disclosure reports for four years from the date that the transaction was reported.
7. General Statutes § 9-608 requires a treasurer of a committee to list each contributor's name and address as well as the amount they are contributing, as well as details about any expenditure that the committee makes. Specifically, the statutes require that:

Each statement filed under subsection (a), (e) or (f) of this section shall include, but not be limited to: (A) An itemized accounting of each contribution, if any, including the full name and complete address of each contributor and the amount of the contribution; (B) an itemized accounting of each expenditure, if any, including the full name and complete address of each payee, including secondary payees whenever the primary or principal payee is known to include charges which the primary payee has already paid or will pay directly to another person, vendor or entity, the amount and the purpose of the expenditure, the candidate supported or opposed by the expenditure, whether the expenditure is made independently of the candidate supported or is an in-kind contribution to the candidate, and a statement of the balance on hand or deficit, as the case may be; (C) an itemized accounting of each expense incurred but not paid, provided if the expense is incurred by use of a credit card, the accounting shall include secondary payees, and the amount owed to each such payee; . . . (F) for each individual who contributes in excess of one hundred dollars but not more than one thousand dollars, in the aggregate, to the extent known, the principal occupation of such individual and the name of the individual's employer, if any; (G) for each individual who contributes in excess of one thousand dollars in the aggregate, the principal occupation of such individual and the name of the individual's employer, if any; (H) for each itemized contribution made by a lobbyist, the spouse of a lobbyist or any dependent child of a lobbyist who resides in the lobbyist's household, a statement to that effect; and (I) for each individual who contributes in excess of four hundred dollars in the aggregate to or for the benefit of any candidate's campaign for nomination at a primary or election to the office of chief executive officer or a slate or town committee financing the nomination or election or a candidate for chief executive officer of a town, city or borough, a statement indicating whether the individual or a business with which he is associated has a contract with said municipality that is valued at more than five thousand dollars. . . .

(2) Each contributor described in subparagraph (F), (G), (H) or (I) of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall, at the time the contributor makes such a contribution, provide the information that the treasurer is required to include under said subparagraph in the statement filed under subsection (a), (e) or (f) of this section. . . .

8. A committee may receive contributions from an individual of up to \$100 in cash, and up to committee limits via check or credit card, according to General Statutes § 9-611 (d). Online contributions may be collected, but only if the committee gathers the required information from contributors, including, but not limited to, the last four numbers of the credit card number, billing address, and e-mail address of the contributor.
9. Commission staff investigated the allegations in the complaint and determined that contributions that were collected by the political committee did not include sufficient information required by General Statutes § 9-608.
10. Specifically, the committee here received contributions via GoFundMe. The contributions, which were returned by GoFundMe to the original contributors and never deposited into the committee's bank account, lacked sufficient information to satisfy the requirements of General Statutes § 9-608.
11. The commission provides comprehensive advice about what documentation must be collected from contributors who give through credit card portals. According to the guidebook for political committee treasurers:

When collecting contributions online, the committee must select a merchant account provider that is able to supply the committee with **all** of the below information as completed by the contributor on the online contribution form. A treasurer **must** ensure that the system they choose receives and adequately records for the treasurer's records the following information from the individual contributor, an online merchant provider must separate:

1. Full name of the individual making the contribution;
2. Residence home address, zip code and telephone number of contributor;
3. Billing address on record with card issuer (if different than residence address) or the last four digits of the credit card;
4. Individual's email address;
5. Amount of contribution;
6. Certification as to whether a contributor is a communicator lobbyist, or member of the immediate family of a communicator lobbyist, for contributions that

separately, or in the aggregate, exceed \$50 (best practice is to obtain it at all amounts);

7. Certification that contributor is not a principal of a state contractor or prospective state contractor (which includes spouse and dependent children over eighteen) if the recipient political committee is authorized to make contributions or expenditures to or for the benefit of any candidate seeking office in the branch of government with which the contractor or prospective state contractor is doing or seeking to do business and if contributor's aggregate contributions to the committee exceed \$50 (best practice is to obtain it at all amounts);

8. Principal occupation, to the extent known, if individual's aggregate contributions to the committee exceed \$100 (best practice is to obtain it at all amounts);

9. Name of employer, if individual's aggregate contributions to the committee exceed \$50 (best practice is to obtain it at all amounts);

10. Donor must affirm the statement: "I am 18 years of age or older";

11. Contributor must affirm the statement: "I certify that this contribution is made on my personal credit card for which I have a legal obligation to pay and intend to pay from my own personal funds, is not being reimbursed in any manner, is not being made as a loan, is not an otherwise prohibited contribution, and that payment on this card is not made from the funds of a corporation, labor organization or any other entity"; and

12. Contributor must affirm the statement: "I am either a United States citizen or a foreign national with permanent resident status in the United States."²

The guidebook further states that the list the merchant account provider must segregate any contributions received on behalf of a political committee into a separate account for that committee.

12. The investigation determined that Respondent Logie, as treasurer for the committee, appeared not to have gathered the information necessary to complete the SEEC Form 20 and provide that information in the relevant campaign finance disclosure reports.
13. In addition, the investigation determined expenditures totaling \$2,365.52 that were made by the committee and reported on the July 10th campaign finance disclosure report for the period of April 1 through June 30, 2021 failed to include adequate reporting regarding expenditures that were made by the committee, including the name of the service provider, address of the service provider, expenditure code and description of the service provided.

² Understanding the Connecticut Campaign Finance Laws: A Guide for Traditional Political Committees, 43. (Connecticut State Elections Enforcement Commission), Hartford, Connecticut, August 2019.

14. The committee also did not specify which candidate the expenditure supported and whether the contribution was made independently of the candidate as required by statutes and regulations.
15. General Statutes § 9-608 also requires committees that have made or received a contribution or expenditure in connection with any other election, a primary or a referendum, to file a campaign finance disclosure statement on the seventh day preceding the election, primary or referendum, The committee here did not complete that disclosure statement due seven days preceding the municipal election on November 2, 2021.
16. The Commission at its November 2, 2022 meeting adopted on the record a proposed agreement in this matter with Respondent June Logie for her violations of General Statutes § 9-608. Counsel presenting the matter requested that the settlement be conditioned upon receipt of the original within 10 days of that meeting.
17. In that proposed settlement Respondent Logie agreed to pay a civil penalty in the amount of \$200.00 and henceforth strictly comply with General Statutes § 9-608 for her violations of that section.
18. Representations by Respondent Logie to Commission counsel indicate that she agreed to the terms of the proposed settlement as well as the payment of a penalty and that she would submit the signed original along with her payment to the Commission within 10 days of that November 2, 2022 meeting.
19. Respondent Logie to date has not honored her agreement by submitting the signed consent order to the Commission along with the payment of a \$200.00 civil penalty. Because this matter had a resolved by date of November 12, 2022 it has therefore now timed-out pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7b (a).
20. Pursuant to General Statutes 9-7a (g) (1)), the Commission therefore dismisses this complaint as it has not resolved this matter within the year since the complaint was docketed.

ORDER

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

That this matter is dismissed, without prejudice and subject to the matter being re-opened by future Commission action.

Adopted this 15th day of February, 2023 at Hartford, Connecticut.



Stephen T. Penny, Chairman
By Order of the Commission