

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA
(Before a Referee)

THE FLORIDA BAR,
Complainant,

Supreme Court Case
No. SC22-590

v.

The Florida Bar File No.
2021-50,291 (9B)

VEGINA TRIMETRICE HAWKINS,
Respondent.

Received, Clerk, Supreme Court

AUG 03 2022

CONDITIONAL GUILTY PLEA FOR CONSENT JUDGMENT

COMES NOW, the undersigned respondent, Veginia Trimetrice Hawkins, and files this Conditional Guilty Plea pursuant to Rule 3-7.9 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

1. Respondent is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a member of The Florida Bar, subject to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Florida.

2. Respondent is acting freely and voluntarily in this matter, and tenders this Plea without fear or threat of coercion. Respondent is represented in this matter.

3. The disciplinary measures to be imposed upon respondent are as follows:

A. Ninety-day suspension from the practice of law with automatic reinstatement.

B. Respondent will contact Florida Lawyers Assistance, Inc. (FLA, Inc.), at 800-282-8981 for an evaluation within thirty (30) days of the order of the Supreme Court of Florida accepting the Report of Referee in this matter. Within sixty (60) days of the order, respondent will provide the bar's headquarters office with proof that respondent has scheduled an evaluation. Respondent will abide by all recommendations made by FLA, Inc. including, but not limited to, entering into a rehabilitation contract. Should a rehabilitative contract result from the FLA, Inc. evaluation, respondent agrees to be placed on probation for the period of the FLA contract, but such probationary period shall not exceed five years.

C. Respondent will pay a FLA, Inc., registration fee of \$250.00 and a probation monitoring fee of \$100.00 per month directly to FLA, Inc. The Florida Bar will monitor respondent's compliance with her FLA, Inc. rehabilitation contract, including nonpayment of the monthly monitoring fees. Should respondent fail to pay FLA, Inc., respondent's failure to pay will be reported to The Florida Bar and the bar will follow up, with regards to respondent's noncompliance, up to and including holding respondent in contempt for failure to pay the monthly monitoring fees.

D. In the event FLA, Inc. recommends respondent attend therapy sessions with a licensed mental health counselor, it is respondent's responsibility to ensure that the counselor submits quarterly reports to The Florida Bar during the probationary period. The quarters are March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 31. The reports shall confirm respondent's counseling and inform The Florida Bar of respondent's continuing ability to engage in the active practice of law. Respondent is responsible for the submission of the quarterly statements to The Florida Bar.

E. Respondent acknowledges that, unless waived or modified by the Court on motion of respondent, the court order will contain a provision that prohibits respondent from accepting new business from the date of the order or opinion and shall provide that the suspension is effective 30 days from the date of the order or opinion so that respondent may close out the practice of law and protect the interest of existing clients.

F. Payment of the costs of The Florida Bar.

4. The following allegations and rules provide the basis for respondent's guilty plea and for the discipline to be imposed in this matter:

A. In June 2019, respondent served as a circuit court judge in the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit of the State of Florida.

B. On the morning of June 11, 2019, respondent interrupted a court employee's work in another courtroom and summoned him into a secure hallway.

C. As the employee walked into the hallway, respondent placed her hands on or near his neck and made a back and forth shaking motion for a period of less than two seconds. The employee immediately stepped back and the two individuals engaged in a discussion.

D. Respondent's actions were captured on a courthouse security camera.

E. The incident occurred because respondent was displeased by the employee's failure to have provided respondent with the documentation needed to prepare for her afternoon docket.

F. The employee reported the matter later that same day.

G. After reviewing the camera footage of the incident with the Chief Judge of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, respondent was advised to self-report her conduct to the Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) and respondent immediately did so.

H. Respondent and her attorney provided a statement to the JQC, dated June 26, 2019, in which respondent apologized, but maintained her "contention" that she never touched the employee, but merely, "invaded his personal space."

I. Despite her belief that she did not physically touch the employee, respondent later, after a JQC hearing which addressed the issue in detail, admitted the video showed she did, in fact, touch the employee and that her actions were inappropriate.

J. Respondent was suspended without pay on July 19, 2019 pursuant to a Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) proceeding.

K. After losing a primary election, respondent resigned from the bench, effective November 20, 2020, and the JQC proceedings were dismissed prior to a hearing taking place.

L. By reason of the foregoing, respondent has violated the following Rules Regulating The Florida Bar:

i. 3-4.3 The standards of professional conduct required of members of the bar are not limited to the observance of rules and avoidance of prohibited acts, and the enumeration of certain categories of misconduct as constituting grounds for discipline are not all-inclusive nor is the failure to specify any particular act of misconduct be construed as tolerance of the act of misconduct. The commission by a lawyer of any act that is unlawful or contrary to honesty and justice may constitute a cause for discipline whether the act is committed in the course of the lawyer's relations as a lawyer or otherwise, whether committed within Florida or

outside the state of Florida, and whether the act is a felony or a misdemeanor.

ii. 4-8.4(b) A lawyer shall not commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects.

iii. 4-8.4(d) A lawyer shall not engage in conduct in connection with the practice of law that is prejudicial to the administration of justice, including to knowingly, or through callous indifference, disparage, humiliate, or discriminate against litigants, jurors, witnesses, court personnel, or other lawyers on any basis, including, but not limited to, on account of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, employment, or physical characteristic.

iv. Oath of Admission to The Florida Bar: "I do solemnly swear: I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Florida; I will maintain the respect due to courts of justice and judicial officers; I will not counsel or maintain any suit or proceedings which shall appear to me to be unjust, nor any defense except such as I believe to be honestly debatable under the law of the land; I will employ for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me such means only as are consistent with truth and honor, and will never seek to

mislead the judge or jury by any artifice or false statement of fact or law; I will maintain the confidence and preserve inviolate the secrets of my clients, and will accept no compensation in connection with their business except from them or with their knowledge and approval; To opposing parties and their counsel, I pledge fairness, integrity, and civility, not only in court, but also in all written and oral communications; I will abstain from all offensive personality and advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness, unless required by the justice of the cause with which I am charged; I will never reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the defenseless or oppressed, or delay anyone's cause for lucre or malice. So help me God.”

5. Respondent and the bar stipulate to the bar voluntarily dismissing rule 4-8.4(c) of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

6. The Florida Bar has approved this proposed plea in the manner required by Rule 3-7.9.

7. If this plea is not finally approved by the referee and the Supreme Court of Florida, then it shall be of no effect and may not be used by the parties in any way.

8. Respondent agrees to eliminate all indicia of respondent's status as an attorney on email, social media, telephone listings, stationery,

checks, business cards office signs or any other indicia of respondent's status as an attorney, whatsoever.

9. If this plea is approved, then respondent agrees to pay all reasonable costs associated with this case pursuant to Rule 3-7.6(q) in the amount of \$2,238.95. These costs are due within 30 days of the court order. Respondent agrees that if the costs are not paid within 30 days of the Court's order becoming final, respondent shall pay interest on any unpaid costs at the statutory rate. Respondent further agrees not to attempt to discharge the obligation for payment of the bar's costs in any future proceedings, including but not limited to, a petition for bankruptcy.

Respondent shall be deemed delinquent and ineligible to practice law pursuant to Rule 1-3.6 if the cost judgment is not satisfied within 30 days of the final court order, unless deferred by the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar.

10. Respondent acknowledges the obligation to pay the costs of this proceeding and that payment is evidence of strict compliance with the conditions of any disciplinary order or agreement and is also evidence of good faith and fiscal responsibility. Respondent understands that failure to pay the costs of this proceeding may reflect adversely on any reinstatement proceedings or any other bar disciplinary matter in which respondent is involved.

11. The following mitigation is applicable in this matter: absence of a prior disciplinary record [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(1)]; absence of a dishonest or selfish motive [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(2)]; personal or emotional problems [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(3)]; full and free disclosure to the bar or cooperative attitude toward the proceedings [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(5)]; imposition of other penalties or sanctions (respondent was subjected to an unpaid suspension from the related Judicial Qualifications Committee proceeding and suffered adverse publicity in the local media) [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(11)]; and, remorse [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(12)].

Respondent previously served an unpaid suspension from July 19, 2019 until her resignation was accepted on November 20, 2020, has been unemployed since that date, and has devoted her time to community service during this time period, indicating interim rehabilitation [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.3(b)(10)].

12. The following aggravation is applicable in this matter: substantial experience in the practice of law (respondent was admitted in 2004) [Florida's Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions 3.2(b)(9)].

13. This Conditional Guilty Plea for Consent Judgment fully complies with all requirements of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.


Dated this 19th day of July, 2022.


Veginah Trimetrice Hawkins
Respondent
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Dated this 20th day of July, 2022


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Dated this 20th day of July, 2022.


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