

State of Arizona
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

Disposition of Complaint 23-105

Judge: Cele Hancock

Complainant: Commission on Judicial Conduct

ORDER

A stipulation accompanying this order resolves this complaint.

In lieu of facing formal charges of misconduct before the Commission, Judge Cele Hancock has resigned from office and entered into an agreement with the Commission that she will never again seek or accept a position involving service as a judicial officer in Arizona. Accordingly, the Commission takes no further action on this complaint and closes its file. Should Judge Hancock fail to abide by her agreement to never again seek or assume a judicial office in Arizona, the Commission will file formal charges against her or seek injunctive relief to enforce the terms of the agreement.

Commission Rule 5 provides that the purpose of the judicial discipline and incapacity system is to protect the public and to maintain the high standards of the judiciary and the administration of justice. The Commission finds that the prompt and final resolution of this complaint, through the accompanying stipulation, serves the purpose of discipline. The Commission further finds that this resolution is sufficient to restore and maintain the dignity and honor of the judiciary and that it protects the public as required by Rule 5.

The Commission's file in this case is hereby closed pursuant to Rule 23. This order and accompanying stipulation, including identifying information, is considered public information. All other records related to this complaint remain confidential pursuant to Rule 9.

Dated: November 6, 2023

FOR THE COMMISSION

/s/ Christopher P. Staring

Hon. Christopher P. Staring
Commission Chair

Copies of this order were distributed to all appropriate persons on November 6, 2023.

**STATE OF ARIZONA
COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT**

Inquiry concerning)	Case No. 23-105
Judge Cele Hancock)	STIPULATED RESOLUTION
Yavapai County Superior Court)	
State of Arizona)	
Respondent)	

Respondent Judge Cele Hancock, through her attorney Edward F. Novak, and Ariel I. Worth, Disciplinary Counsel for the Commission on Judicial Conduct ("Commission") hereby stipulate as follows:

JURISDICTION

1. The Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to Article 6.1 of the Arizona Constitution.

2. Respondent was initially elected as a full-time judge of the Yavapai County Superior Court in November 2010, and she continues to serve in that capacity. Respondent is currently restricted to administrative duties pursuant to Administrative Order 23-55 of the Arizona Supreme Court issued on March 19, 2023.

3. As a judge of the superior court when the alleged misconduct occurred, Respondent was and is subject to the Code of Judicial Conduct ("Code") as set forth at Arizona Supreme Court Rule 81.

BACKGROUND

4. On March 19, 2023, Respondent was arrested on suspicion of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

5. On March 23, 2023, the Commission opened an investigation into the circumstances of Respondent's arrest pursuant to its authority under Rule 20.

6. On May 26, 2023, Respondent pled guilty and was convicted of the crime of Driving or Actual Physical Control While Under the Influence, with an alcohol concentration of .08 or higher, in violation of Arizona Revised Statutes, Section 28-1381 (A)(2), a class one misdemeanor.

7. On October 18, 2023, a duly appointed investigative panel found reasonable cause to commence formal proceedings against Respondent for violation of Rules 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 of the Code, and Article 6.1, Section 4 of the Arizona Constitution.

)
MUTUAL CONSIDERATION

8. Respondent agrees to submit her written resignation as a judge of the Yavapai County Superior Court to the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors by Monday, November 6, 2023. The resignation shall be effective no later than January 2, 2024.

9. Respondent agrees not to seek or accept a judicial appointment of any type, not to run for an elective judicial office, or serve in any judicial capacity¹ in the State of Arizona at any time after the effective date of her resignation.

¹ The parties agree that not serving in any judicial capacity encompasses the definition of "Judge" in the Code of Judicial Conduct, which states: "Judge" means any person who is authorized to perform judicial functions within the Arizona judiciary, including a justice or judge of a court of record, a justice of the peace, magistrate, court commissioner, special master, hearing officer, referee or pro tempore judge.

10. Respondent makes no admissions to a violation of the Code or the Arizona Constitution.

11. The Commission makes no findings of fact or conclusions of law in this matter.

12. The parties agree that resolving this matter by stipulation is in their mutual best interest and in the best interest of the public and the judicial system.

AGREED UPON DISPOSITION

13. Upon execution of this agreement, the Commission shall close Case No. 23-105 and take no further action. This case will not be re-opened unless this agreement is breached by Respondent as further outlined in paragraph 15.

OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

14. This agreement resolves all issues raised in Case No. 23-105. This agreement may be used as evidence in later proceedings in accordance with the Commission's Rules.

15. In the event Respondent fails to comply with the terms and conditions of this agreement by failing to tender her resignation or by seeking appointment or election to a judicial office or serving as a judge in Arizona, the Commission may re-open Case No. 23-105 by giving Respondent written notice of its intention to do. A formal Statement of Charges, having been previously authorized, will be filed pursuant to the Commission's Rules. Respondent waives any and all claims concerning delay or other irregularities in the Commission so doing.

16. In the event Respondent fails to comply with the terms and conditions of this agreement by failing to tender her resignation or by seeking appointment or

election to a judicial office or serving as a judge in Arizona, the Commission may also seek injunctive relief enjoining Respondent from engaging in conduct in breach of the terms and conditions of this agreement.

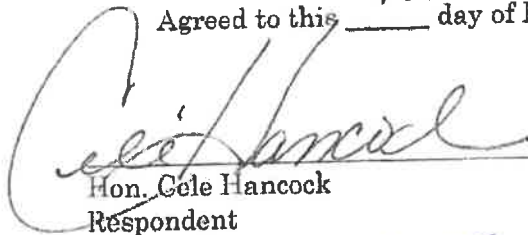
17. Both parties agree that the Stipulated Resolution and Final Disposition Order shall be public documents.


18. Both parties will pay their own costs and attorney's fees, if any, associated with this matter.


19. Respondent understands the terms and conditions of this agreement and fully agrees to and will abide by them.

20. This agreement constitutes the complete understanding between the parties.

Agreed to this 1st day of November 2023.


Hon. Cele Hancock
Respondent


Edward F. Novak
Attorney for Respondent


Ariel I. Worth, Disciplinary Counsel
Commission on Judicial Conduct