

Wilmington, Delaware  
August 22, 2024

**#0463**

**Sponsor:**

**Council  
Member  
Darby**

**WHEREAS**, as legislative representatives elected by the citizens of Wilmington, members of City Council must be held to the highest standard in the way they conduct themselves in the public light, as well as the manner in which they conduct public business; and

**WHEREAS**, elected officials shall represent their constituents rather than their own interests; and

**WHEREAS**, in July 2022, Councilwoman Zanthia Oliver, 3<sup>rd</sup> District (“Councilwoman Oliver”), sponsored an event called “Love Is in the Air,” at Brown/Burton/Winchester Park. The usage fee was \$610.00. Councilwoman Oliver agreed to pay the usage fee out of her City Council discretionary funds. At her request, the City issued a \$610.00 check made out to the City of Wilmington. On August 1, 2022, Councilwoman Oliver endorsed the check and deposited it into her personal checking account; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 29, 2022, Councilwoman Oliver was notified of the improper endorsement. She promptly repaid the City; and

**WHEREAS**, in August 2022, Councilwoman Oliver, in partnership with the Eastside Community Association (“ESCA”), began coordinating an event called “A Salute to Women Veterans” to be held at the Chase Center on the Riverfront in September 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, on or about August 22, 2022, Councilwoman Oliver requested from the City a \$4,900.00 check, payable to ESCA, to pay the Chase Center’s required deposit; and

**WHEREAS**, Councilwoman Oliver endorsed the check and deposited into ESCA’s bank account. Councilwoman Oliver was able to do this because she had been “on and off

[ESCA's] Board for years.” Councilwoman Oliver’s required financial disclosures in 2021 and 2022 did not mention service on *any* corporate or non-profit boards; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Wilmington Ethics Commission (“Ethics Commission”) received a complaint regarding these purported ethical violations; and

**WHEREAS**, on September 10, 2022, the Ethics Commission voted to refer the matter for investigation; and

**WHEREAS**, on September 13, 2023, after an investigation, the Ethics Commission received a Statement of Alleged Violation that Councilwoman Oliver’s abovementioned conduct violated Wilmington City Code Sections 2-341(a) and 2-345.1(c)(1)(a)(8); and

**WHEREAS**, on November 13, 2023, Councilwoman Oliver agreed to an “Agreed Disposition” of a public reprimand for violating the aforementioned City Code Sections; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission approved the Agreed Disposition on November 14, 2023.

**WHEREAS**, this was the second public reprimand Councilwoman Oliver received in 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, in response to this Ethics Commission investigation, City Council requested the City Auditor to accelerate its scheduled audit of all Council grant funds; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 31, 2024, the City Auditor released “Audit 24-02: Performance Audit of City Council Grants.” It found that Councilwoman Oliver personally endorsed several checks meant for ESCA. The Report concluded that:

Discrepancies were noted during a review of cancelled checks from the Eastside Civic Association (ESCA) consistent with what prompted an ethics complaint being filed with the Wilmington Ethics Commission.

A total of 50 transactions for the 3<sup>rd</sup> district council person were tested. This represents 100% of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district council person's disbursements during the [108<sup>th</sup> Session of Council]. There were eight checks disbursed to ESCA. Four out of the eight checks reviewed were endorsed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> District Councilperson; and

**WHEREAS**, the Report further observed that "council members should be reminded of the importance of thoroughly completing financial disclosures"; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in this spirit that the City Council feels compelled to recognize improper behavior manifest in the actions of one of its members, and censure that behavior to set the tone that appearances of impropriety shall not be tolerated; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in this spirit that the City Council wishes to inform the public that it takes these violations seriously, must hold each other accountable, and must continue to work to maintain public trust and rebuild it when it is lost.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON** that Council seeks to formally censure Councilwoman Zanthia Oliver for repeated "conflict of interests" that go beyond the Ethics Commission's findings.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Council renews its resolve to the principles outlined in the City Code upheld by its members, and the Oath of Office taken by its members. This Council stands at the ready to move forward, and to collaborate around matters of community importance to our City.

Passed by City Council,

DATE

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

**SYNOPSIS:** This Resolution issues a censure of Councilmember Zanthia Oliver, following the City of Wilmington Ethics Commission's second public reprimand in a calendar year and the City Auditor's report detailing conflicts of interest.