

Before the School Ethics Commission
OAL Docket No.: EEC-15815-22
SEC Docket No.: C12-24
Final Decision (Settlement)

Stephanie Johnson,
Complainant

v.

August Daleo,
Pinelands Regional Board of Education, Ocean County,
Respondent

I. Procedural History

The above-captioned matter arises from a Complaint that was filed with the School Ethics Commission (Commission) on February 2, 2024, by Stephanie Johnson (Complainant), alleging that August Daleo (Respondent), a member of the Pinelands Regional Board of Education (Board), violated the School Ethics Act (Act), *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq.* More specifically, the Complaint avers that Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members (Code). On April 11, 2024, Respondent filed a Written Statement, and alleged that the Complaint is frivolous. On April 18, 2024, Complainant filed a response to the allegation of frivolous filing.

At its meeting on October 22, 2024, and after reviewing the Complaint, Written Statement, and response to the allegation of frivolous filing, the Commission adopted a decision finding probable cause for the alleged violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, but not finding probable cause for the alleged violations of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)*. Based on its decision, the Commission also voted to transmit the matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), where Complainant would carry the burden to prove that Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*. The Commission also adopted a decision finding the Complaint not frivolous, and denying Respondent's request for sanctions.

At the OAL, the parties agreed to amicably resolve the matter and, on or about March 31, 2026, the parties filed a fully executed settlement agreement. The Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) issued an Initial Decision (Settlement) on April 10, 2026, which concluded that the settlement agreement is voluntary, consistent with the law, and should be approved.

At its meeting on May 26, 2026, the Commission reviewed the Initial Decision (Settlement), and at its meeting on June 23, 2026, the Commission voted to adopt the Initial Decision (Settlement) as its Final Decision. However, the Commission also voted not to take a position on the enforceability of the parties' written settlement agreement.

II. Analysis

In their fully executed settlement agreement, the parties set forth the terms of their settlement. More specifically, the parties agreed, in relevant part, that the Complaint is withdrawn with prejudice. Respondent also agrees that he will read a statement at the next scheduled Board meeting that states:

On October 5, 2023, I attended a ‘Meet the Candidates’ Event that was hosted at the Four Seasons Harbor Bay senior center. I was not directly invited to this event but attended as a member of the public. While at the event, I interrupted Ms. Johnson while she was addressing the public and called her a ‘liar.’ This behavior was inappropriate, rude, and caused a disruption, and I apologize for my actions that evening.

Further, neither party admits liability or wrongdoing in this matter and neither party shall be considered a prevailing party. *Initial Decision (Settlement)* (attachment).

After reviewing the terms of the parties’ settlement agreement, the ALJ found that the “settlement is voluntary, consistent with the law, and fully dispositive of all issues in controversy between the parties in this case.” *Initial Decision (Settlement)* at 2. As such, the ALJ approved the settlement agreement. *Ibid.*

III. Decision

Following its review, the Commission does not find a reason why it should not defer to the parties’ mutual decision to amicably resolve their dispute. The Commission adopts the *Initial Decision (Settlement)* as its Final Decision, but does not take a position on the enforceability of the parties’ written settlement agreement.

Consequently, the above-captioned matter is hereby dismissed.

Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

Mailing Date: June 23, 2026

***Resolution Adopting Final Decision (Settlement)
in Connection with C12-24***

Whereas, at its meeting on October 22, 2024, the School Ethics Commission (Commission) voted to transmit the above-captioned matter to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) for a hearing; and

Whereas, at the OAL, the parties submitted a duly executed settlement agreement to the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) for review; and

Whereas, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision on April 10, 2026, concluding that the settlement agreement is voluntary, consistent with the law, and should be approved; and

Whereas, at its meeting on May 26, 2026, the Commission considered the Initial Decision and discussed adopting the Initial Decision as its Final Decision, but not taking a position on the enforceability of the parties' written settlement agreement, and dismissing the matter; and

Whereas, at its meeting on June 23, 2026, the Commission reviewed and voted to approve the within decision as accurately memorializing its actions/findings from its meeting on May 26, 2026; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, the Commission hereby adopts the within decision as its Final Decision, and directs its staff to notify all parties to this action of its decision herein.

Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

I hereby certify that this Resolution was duly adopted by the School Ethics Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on June 23, 2026.

Brigid C. Martens, Director
School Ethics Commission