

**CITY OF REIDSVILLE, GEORGIA**  
**ETHICS COMMITTEE**

On the matters that has come before the City of Reidsville's, Georgia, Ethics Committee dated August 20,2025 by the petitioner, Vicki Nail, hereafter the "Petitioner" against the respondents, Carolyn Blackshear, Theron Harris, and Verdie Williams, hereinafter the "Respondents" as received and action taken starting on August 20,2025 by the Ethics Committee with a decision/recommendation to the Mayor and City Council through City Counsel dated this day as follows:

**1. Issue:**

The issue is: Whether the Respondents in their individual and/or collective capacity as an elected official to the City of Reidsville, GA OR in a duly appointed position by the Mayor, who is/are actively serving the City of Reidsville, GA, violated an ethical duty as so alleged by the Petitioner.

**2. Pertinent allegations, charter section(s), rule(s), ordinance(s) relating to the alleged ethical violation:**

On August 20, 2025, the Ethics Committee received Complaints from the Petitioner individually with the exact same allegations against the three named Respondents so named above. Each Respondent is a duly elected council member serving their individual Ward/Post.

On August 20, 2025, the Petitioner signs the Ethics Complaints form that she is "not filing this complaint as a personal attack on or to embarrass or to tarnish the reputation of the respondent or in retaliation as a personal grievance against the respondent outside his/her ethical obligations relating to his/her appointed or elected position with the City of Reidsville.

On August 21, 2025, copies of the complaints were given to City Council for dissemination to the Respondents and asking for replies within the week.

On August 27, 2025, the Committee received an email exchange between Carolyn Blackshear and City Counsel with Mrs. Blackshear's reply.

### **3. Discussion/analysis:**

The Ethics Committee has met on several occasions to receive, read and discuss these complaints.

This Committee refers to # 1 above. These Respondents would fall under the purview of this committee.

The Committee considers these complaints collectively because they are identical and arise out of the same set of facts/circumstances.

The Committee considers the Petitioner's declaration on signing these Complaints.

The Committee referred to City Charter as referred to by the Petitioner.

The Committee referred to City Charter Part II, Article VI, Section 2-173(1). As the Committee shall review [complaint] to determine whether the complaint is unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or fails to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary action or is to be considered for further investigation.

Although not required, but given the temperaments involved, the Committee offers the following explanation for its decision.

“Frivolous” is when a petition is filed having no legal basis which is often filed to harass an opposing party. Citing Black’s Law Dictionary.

In Georgia, “patently unfounded” is a legal term most communities use in the context of ethics and disciplinary complaints, not a general statute. It describes a claim that is so clearly baseless that it fails to justify further investigation. It is when a complaint is clear and obviously lacking any basis often determined after an investigation or evidence gathered on a good faith report which fails to state sufficient evidence to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction such that the clean and undeniable nature of the report lacks truth obvious to anyone investigating it.

The timing of the Petitioner’s complaints is curious.

This Petitioner may have believed, at the time of filing her complaint, she did so in good faith, meaning she had reasonable cause for suspicion at the time, but further investigation reveals no basis in fact. Versus, a false report which lacks any initial basis in fact and may be seen as malicious or without reasonable cause rather than in good faith.

Given Petitioner's temperament at the August 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> City meeting and subsequent actions, it is reasonable to conclude that her actions only promote her agenda.

The Respondents deny any meeting as alleged by the Petitioner.

The Respondents sought a motion, it was voted on, and all members of the council the Petitioner participated in the meeting (executive session). The vote to have the executive session carried before the open meeting. The parties' participation is acquiescence. This Committee presumes that the Petitioner's and one other council member's objections/vote were noted by the City Clerk. The Petitioner has no vote. The other council member, as well known and published in the local paper, has pending criminal charges to which may still involve the City of Reidsville police department.

Mr. Theron Harris is the Mayor's appointed City Council liaison to the Police Department.

Evidence offered by the Petitioner states "strides had been taken to close the investigation" involving a police officer on paid administrative leave. See letter dated August 15, 2025, allegedly written by the City Clerk.

The investigator's report states, that the police officer did contact the investigator. The police officer had a reasonable explanation for delaying, not meeting, if any occurred, in contacting the investigator. He had a close family member die and sought legal representation.



The same evidence states that, "The Mayor stated that this (placing on leave from without pay to with pay) could not be done with a meeting." This statement was allegedly made to two of these Respondents in the hallway at City Hall with City Council present.

Continuing with the same recollection, this Petitioner is remembered to have stated in the presence of and to the Respondents there, that there was no time to give notice of the investigation which was initiated by the Petitioner and the Chief of Police. And, that the Respondent was wrong in "stepping into the investigation." The Petitioner was allowed to hire, invoice the City, and participate in the investigation.

The City Charter allows for situations, by vote of three council members, to override any action taken individually by the Mayor.

As a clarification, under the same recollection, the Mayor does not have "rights as Mayor." She has duties. It is not correct to state such unfettered domain.

According to this recollection, the police officer status was changed from without pay to with pay.

Note, it is different to call an executive session at a regular meeting with all council members present and to call a special meeting outside of a regular meeting time. All council members were present on August 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. These Petitioners sought a explanation of what was going on and claimed to not being properly informed of any investigation, especially the choice of investigator, solely interviewed and chosen by the Petitioner.

See complaint citing City Charter, Section 2-2.13.

As offered by the Petitioner, City Charter Section 3.109(a)m, states “the council...” The Mayor is given her authority through the council.

Continuing on, under City Charter section 2-170 and 2-171, there was no disclosure because none was necessary and no city council member needed to leave the meeting.

Which now leads this Committee to explain the concept of recusal. Recusal comes from within. It is not a concept that can be forced upon a person especially by filing an ethics complaint to force recusal. It is a concept to which a person takes to by themselves because he/she wants to continue the public’s trust. Trust is essential to the running of anything on behalf of others.

If the Petitioner is successful in forcing the recusal of 1, 2, or all 3 Respondents, she would effectively have unfettered discretion. The City requires three votes out of five. If 1 is taken away it would leave four votes which would likely be split 2/2. If 2 were taken away it would leave a 2/1 vote with no majority vote. And, if 3 were taken away it would leave only 2 council members to vote with no majority.

No action would even be possible against the Petitioner. The Petitioner would then likely use such a scenario in future to force her unfettered domain.

Additionally, the Petitioner's logic is flawed because if the Petitioner is correct that it is an ethical violation not to recuse oneself, she fails to show that any of these three Respondents, individually or collectively, were promised, sought out, received, bargained for, or the like a favor of a personal nature.

It is reasonable, with a City of this size and that most persons live their entire lives here, that everyone would know everyone else. Being a close personal friend is not enough. And it is reasonable that a citizen would complain to their council person.

These Respondents were representing their constituents. One was operating in his additional liaison appointment. In all ways these Respondents were acting for the City. No elected or appointed official operates with autonomy. Hopefully, this will not alienate any of these parties so the City may operate with its' motto as the "Friendship City."

Under Robert's Rules of Order, recusal came from within not forced upon an official. Should a council person who has pending criminal matters recuse themselves from matters concerning the police department?

A recusal is when a member removes themselves from participating in a matter due to a conflict of interest (promise of financial gain or favor) or other reason that would make their participation inappropriate. It is distinct from abstention, which is simply not voting as recusal involves removing oneself from all aspects of the issues. There is no compulsion [shall] to remove oneself.

**4. Decision/recommendation:**

Therefore, this Committee holds that the Respondents individually or collectively, did not breach any ethical duty by their not recusing themselves or being forced to recuse with the filing of an ethics complaint against them. These complaints are dismissed in their entirety as either or collectively unjustified, unfounded and/or frivolous. This Committee makes no recommendation or action to be taken against these Respondents, individually or collectively.

Signed this 28<sup>th</sup> day of August 2025 by all members of the City of Reidsville's,

Georgia, appointed and reappointed by the City Council and currently serving

Ethics Committee.

Mordena Richardson 8/28/25

Mordena Richardson

Holly Sanborn Dyer 8/28/2025

Holly Sanborn Dyer

Greg Carr 8/28/2025

Greg Carr

**This decision is not for publication, especially on any social media platform. This decision is ONLY for the eyes of the Petitioner, Respondent, City Counsel, City Council persons and the Mayor. All information to and from the Ethics Committee is kept confidential. None of the information relating to this Complaint shall be shared with any persons not listed in the previous sentence above.**