

# DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD

OF THE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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ASSISTANT COUNSEL

February 21, 2012

**VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, R.R.R. & REGULAR MAIL**

Christopher T. Howell  
348 Franklin Street  
Bloomfield, New Jersey 07003

**Re: In the Matter of Christopher T. Howell**  
Docket No. DRB 11-388  
District Docket No. VC-2010-0032E  
**LETTER OF ADMONITION**

Dear Mr. Howell:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to impose an admonition.

Specifically, in May 2009, you entered into a retainer agreement with Gwendolyn Samuels to represent her in a foreclosure action. At the time of your retention, Samuels had already filed a pro se answer. A motion for summary judgment was pending. You succeeded in having the plaintiff withdraw the motion and proceed with court-appointed mediation. Settlement negotiations fell apart in January 2010, however, whereupon the plaintiff re-filed its motion for summary judgment.

Although you informed Samuels that you did not believe that she had a meritorious defense or counterclaims, she understood, through your communications, that you would, nevertheless, file an amended answer and counterclaims and oppose the summary judgment

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motion. You did neither. Your conduct in this regard violated RPC 1.3. You also failed to keep Samuels informed about the status of the matter, a violation of RPC 1.4(b).

The Board found no clear and convincing evidence, however, that you were guilty of recordkeeping violations or that you made a false statement of material fact or law to a tribunal.

In imposing only an admonition, the Board considered that you have no ethics history, that Samuels did not suffer any financial consequences from your conduct, and that you were very remorseful for your actions.

Your conduct has adversely reflected not only upon you as an attorney but also upon all members of the bar. Accordingly, the Board has directed the issuance of this admonition to you. R. 1:20-15(f)(4).

A permanent record of this occurrence has been filed with the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Board's office. Should you become the subject of any further discipline, it will be taken into consideration.

The Board has also directed that the costs of the disciplinary proceedings be assessed against you. An invoice of costs will be forwarded under separate cover.

Very truly yours,

by   
Julianne K. DeCore  
Chief Counsel

JKD/sl

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c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner  
Associate Justices  
Louis Pashman, Chair  
Disciplinary Review Board  
Mark Neary, Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey  
Gail G. Haney, Deputy Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey (w/ethics history)  
Charles Centinaro, Director  
Office of Attorney Ethics  
Peter A. Gaudio, Chair, District VC Ethics Committee  
William B. Ziff, Acting Secretary,  
District VC Ethics Committee  
Gwendolyn Samuels, Grievant