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December 30, 1997

Certified Mail - R.R.R. and Regular Mail

William E. Norris, Esq.
1259 Route 46
Parsippany, New Jersey 07054

Re: In the Matter of William E. Norris
Docket No. DRB 97-400
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Norris:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper. Specifically, in your representation of the sellers in a real estate transaction, you held \$39,500 in escrow as required by the terms of the contract. The funds were to be paid to the seller on closing or if agreed to in writing by buyer and seller. In the event of a disagreement, the funds were to be deposited in Court.

Because of both parties' inability to satisfactorily resolve a problem with the septic system, the buyers terminated the contract, and requested the return of the deposit. The sellers considered cancellation by the purchasers as a breach of contract and requested money damages. You returned \$36,944.29 to the buyers, keeping \$2,179.13, which included one-half of the interest earned, to your clients, and \$450 as an "additional fee" for you. Buyers' counsel objected to your actions, noting that any dispute was to be resolved by a court. Shortly thereafter, the buyers filed this grievance against you. You have since made restitution to the buyers and also apologized to them. Your conduct was unethical and violated RPC 1.15(b).

In imposing only an admonition, the Board noted your previous unblemished record as well as the fact that, while you currently recognize that your conduct was unethical, at the time you believed both that your clients were entitled to damages and that, once the purchasers negotiated the escrow check, you could disperse the balance of the escrowed funds. The Board also noted your record of public service.

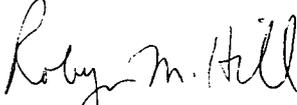
I/M/O William E. Norris
DRB No. 97-440

Your conduct 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 affidavit of costs will be forwarded under separate cover.

Very truly yours,


Robyn M. Hill

RMH:ms

c. Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz
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District X Ethics Committee
Noel E. Schablik, Esq., Respondent's Counsel