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SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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September 29, 2010

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

Stephanie A. Hand
c/o Thomas R. Ashley, Esq.
50 Park Place
Suite 1400
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Re: In the Matter of Stephanie A. Hand
Docket No. DRB 10-196
District Docket Nos. VC-09-903E and XIV-06-471E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Ms. Hand:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper. Specifically, in May 2006 you represented Patricia Richardson in her purchase of real estate from Abraham George. Prior to the sale to Richardson, George entered into a "joint venture" with Elisa Gill, whereby Gill would assist him in selling the property and would receive any sale proceeds above the asking price. At the time of the sale, George was involved in a bankruptcy proceeding. You were aware of George's bankruptcy proceeding and of his agreement with Gill.

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In March 2006, George's attorney filed a motion seeking the bankruptcy court's approval of the sale. The motion was denied for failure to provide for the remittance of the sale proceeds to the trustees.

Prior to the May 1, 2006 closing, you did not ascertain that the court had approved the sale. Although you asked your staff to obtain a copy of the order from George's attorney and were informed that the copy was being faxed to your office, you proceeded with the closing without a copy of the order, relying instead on George's representation that "everything went fine" on the return date of the motion.

As it turned out, the sale was for \$200,000 above the price listed on the contract attached to the motion to the bankruptcy court and named a different buyer. Neither George's attorney nor the trustee knew about the sale until later. Because George led you to believe that he would have the bankruptcy dismissed, you were unaware that the proceeds were to be turned over to the trustee and, in fact, did not do so. Ultimately, you returned your fee, after the trustee obtained an order of disgorgement. The court later approved the sale nunc pro tunc.

In mitigation, the Board considered your lack of prior discipline, and the testimony offered by several witnesses about your competency, honesty, and integrity as an attorney.

In failing to act with diligence and failing to ensure that the sale met with the court's approval in every respect, you violated RPC 1.3 and RPC 8.4(d).


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.

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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/paa

c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Associate Justices
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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
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Andrew M. Epstein, Chair, District VC Ethics Committee
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