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RICHARD J. HUGHES JUSTICE COMPLEX
P.O. BOX 962
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0962
(609) 815-2920
drb.mbx@njcourts.gov

TIMOTHY M. ELLIS
CHIEF COUNSEL
NICOLE M. ACCHIONE
FIRST ASSISTANT COUNSEL
BARRY R. PETERSEN, JR.
DEPUTY COUNSEL
SALIMA ELIZABETH BURKE
ADALINE KASER
ASHLEY KOLATA-GUZIK
NICHOLAS LOGOTHETIS
ALISA H. THATCHER
ASSISTANT COUNSEL

May 29, 2026

VIA CERTIFIED, REGULAR & ELECTRONIC MAIL

Joel Andrew Davies
c/o Peter J. Van Dyke, Esq.
Kelaher, Van Dyke, Moriarty & Kalksma
680 Hooper Avenue
Building C, Suite 302
Toms River, New Jersey 08753
pvandyke@kvdmmlaw.com

Re: In the Matter of Joel Andrew Davies
Docket No. DRB 26-072
District Docket No. IIIA-2022-0013E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Davies:

The Disciplinary Review Board (the Board) reviewed your conduct in the above matter and determined that it was improper. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to impose an admonition for your violation of RPC 1.3 (lacking diligence), RPC 1.4(b) (failing to communicate with a client), and RPC 1.5(b) (failing to set forth, in writing, the basis or rate of the legal fee). The Board determined, however, to dismiss the charge that you violated RPC 1.1(b) (engaging in a pattern of neglect).

Specifically, in or around August 2021, Meredith Asparrin retained you to represent her in connection with the estate of her uncle (the Estate). Asparrin and her siblings were heirs to the estate. At the time she retained you, Asparrin

recently had learned that her late uncle's condominium had become subject to tax sale foreclosure proceedings. Thus, she sought your assistance to (1) arrange for her appointment as administrator of the Estate, and (2) defend against the tax foreclosure proceedings.

You requested an initial \$500 retainer fee for the representation and explained to Asparrin that you would receive payment for your additional legal services from the Estate's assets at the close of the Estate matter. However, you failed to provide a written retainer agreement to Asparrin.

On November 2, 2021, counsel for the holder of the tax sale certificate for the condominium filed an amended tax foreclosure complaint, joining Asparrin as a named defendant. In reply, by letter dated December 6, 2021, you informed counsel for the certificate holder that you represented Asparrin as the proposed administrator of the Estate and requested thirty days to arrange for Asparrin's appointment as administrator, after which you would be able to file an answer to the complaint. Also on December 6, 2021, your office sent to Asparrin, via e-mail, a copy of your letter to opposing counsel, as well as a second message, requesting her uncle's and father's death certificates and a replacement check for the retainer fee, because her first check was apparently lost.

Asparrin timely provided the death certificates and replacement check. Nevertheless, you failed to take any steps to secure her appointment as administrator of the Estate or to address the tax foreclosure matter.

On January 13, 2022, the tax sale certificate holder filed a request for entry of default and a motion for entry of an order fixing the amount, time, and place for redemption of the property. You neither filed opposition to the motion nor sought to resolve the matter in any other way.

Thereafter, on January 28, 2022, the tax foreclosure court issued an order memorializing the entry of default and setting March 29, 2022 as the date for the redemption. Again, you failed to address the matter.

Finally, on April 21, 2022, the trial court entered a final judgment of tax foreclosure.

According to Asparrin, between August 2021 and April 2022, she received no communications from you, other than the two December 6, 2021 e-mail

messages. In late April 2022, after learning that the court had entered the final judgment of tax foreclosure, she attempted to contact you on multiple occasions, via mail, e-mail, and telephone, for information regarding her matter and to discuss next steps. Although she spoke to you once, by telephone, in May 2022, you otherwise failed to respond to her increasingly urgent communications.

On July 16, 2022, Asparrin filed an ethics grievance against you. About two months later, she contacted you to request a refund of her \$500 retainer, and you promptly reimbursed the full amount. Moreover, on November 15, 2022, she sent you a letter, via e-mail, stating that she was aware she could sue you for legal malpractice and report your misconduct to the Office of Attorney Ethics (the OAE), but she was interested in settling the matter amicably. In a reply e-mail, you asked what she proposed. She wrote back, indicating that you should restore her to the position she would have been in, had you handled her case properly. You did not pursue the exchange further.

At the ethics hearing, you testified that you were concerned about the impropriety of negotiating an ethics claim with Asparrin, but that your office set aside funds to provide restitution to her for damages resulting from your mishandling of the Estate matter. You further testified that, according to your calculations, if she and her siblings had sold the condominium in summer 2022, the net value of the Estate would have been approximately \$44,520.

Based on the above facts, you admitted that you violated RPC 1.3, RPC 1.4(b), and RPC 1.5(b).

Following a de novo review of the record, the Board found that clear and convincing evidence supports each of your admitted ethics violations. However, the Board determined to dismiss the charged violation of RPC 1.1(b). Whereas a violation of that Rule requires at least three instances of neglect, in three distinct client matters, here, your misconduct affected only one client matter.

In imposing only an admonition, the Board accorded mitigating weight to your lack of prior discipline in thirty-six years at the bar. Also in mitigation, you admitted your wrongdoing, took responsibility for your misconduct, refunded Asparrin's retainer fee, and did not engage in your misconduct for personal gain. Finally, you have performed notable service to the community and the bar, and several character witnesses testified to your good reputation and character.

Your conduct has adversely reflected not only on you as an attorney but also on 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, this admonition will be taken into consideration.

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

Very truly yours,

/s/ Timothy M. Ellis

Timothy M. Ellis
Chief Counsel

TME/knd

c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Associate Justices
Heather Joy Baker, Clerk
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Hon. Mary Catherine Cuff, P.J.A.D. (Ret.), Chair
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Johanna Barba Jones, Director
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Ryan J. Moriarty, Statewide Ethics Coordinator and Acting Secretary,
District IIIA Ethics Committee
Office of Attorney Ethics (e-mail)
Kathleen C. Moriarty, Esq., Chair
District IIIA Ethics Committee (e-mail)
Charles P. Tivenan, Esq., Presenter (regular mail and e-mail)
Meredith Asparrin, Grievant (regular mail)