

The DeKalb County Board of Ethics requests that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners take action to enforce the December 15, 2022 decision of Board of Ethics against Vaughn Irons in the Ethics Board case of Rhea Johnson vs. Vaughn Irons.

### **BACKGROUND**

Vaughn Irons previously served as the Chairman of the DeKalb County Development Authority (“Development Authority”), while, simultaneously serving as the founder and CEO of the for-profit, private corporation, APD Solutions, LLC. (“APD”). Per its website, APD was then described as a “community and economic development firm” serving “public and private sector organizations who are seeking ways to revitalize neighborhoods or grow local industry that result in vibrant and competitive places.”

On April 10, 2012, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners awarded a \$1 million contract to Mr. Irons’s company, APD. Then Commissioner Stan Watson seconded the motion to award the contract to APD and voted in favor of the award. After leaving public office, Commissioner Watson admitted in a separate ethics matter that in April 2012, he became a paid “consultant” for APD. At the time of the contract award, it was not disclosed that former Commissioner Watson was a paid consultant for APD.

The following are the payments to APD and Stan Watson:

- Per County records, APD received a total of \$972,000 for its contract with DeKalb County. APD paid Stan Watson’s consultant fees totaling \$19,800.
- 2012: APD received approximately \$650,000 from DeKalb County. APD paid Commissioner Stan Watson \$6,800 in 2012.
- 2013: APD received approximately \$250,000 from DeKalb County. APD paid Commissioner Stan Watson \$6,500 in 2013.
- 2014: APD received approximately \$60,000 from DeKalb County. APD paid Commissioner Stan Watson \$6,500 in 2014.
- On September 29, 2015, the Board of Ethics issued a public reprimand to Mr. Vaughn Irons served as the Chairman of the DeKalb County Development Authority
- On September 29, 2015, the Board of Ethics issued a public reprimand to Commissioner Watson with regards to his undisclosed relationship with APD.

### **ETHICS BOARD DECISION**

At the conclusion of the December 15, 2022, hearing in this matter, the Ethics Board found that through his actions Mr. Irons violated Sections 22A(c)(2)(7) and 22A(d) of the Ethics Code.

Section 22A(c)(2)(7) “prohibits any Dekalb official from engaging in any activity or transaction that is prohibited by law now existing or hereafter enacted which is applicable to him or her by virtue of his or her being an official or employee of DeKalb County.”

Section 22A(d) provides “every official... who has an interest that he or she has reason to believe may be affected ... by the official acts or actions of another official or employee of DeKalb County shall disclose the precise nature and value of such interest by sworn written statement to the Board of Ethics and ask for the board’s opinion as to the property (sic) of such interest... The information disclosed by such sworn statements, except for the valuation attributed to the disclosed interest, shall be made a matter of public record by the Board of Ethics.”

Based upon its decision, the Ethics Board imposed the following penalties against Mr. Irons.:

- (1) The issuance of a public reprimand by the Ethics Board of Mr. Irons pursuant to 22A(k)(B) of the Ethics Code; and
- (2) Recommend to the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Commissioners of DeKalb County the indefinite suspension of Mr. Irons or his company, APD, or all other businesses owned by Vaughn Irons, to contract with DeKalb County.

**REQUEST TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

The Ethics Board requests that Chief Executive Officer, and the Board of Commissioners enforce the December 15, 2022 decision of the Ethics Board to indefinitely suspend Mr. Irons, or his company, APD, or all other businesses owned by Vaughn Irons, to contract with DeKalb County.