



STATE OF NEVADA

BEFORE THE NEVADA COMMISSION ON ETHICS

In re **Devon Reese**, City Councilman,
City of Reno
State of Nevada,

Ethics Complaint
Case No. 24-036C, 24-050C

Subject. /

STIPULATED DISMISSAL AGREEMENT

1. **PURPOSE:** This Stipulated Agreement resolves Ethics Complaint, Consolidated Case Nos. 24-036C / 24-050C ("Complaint") before the Nevada Commission on Ethics ("Commission") concerning Devon Reese ("Reese") and serves as the final opinion in this matter.

2. **JURISDICTION:** At all material times, Reese was a City Councilmember for the City of Reno ("City") and was a public officer as defined in NRS 281A.160. The Ethics in Government Law ("Ethics Law") set forth in NRS Chapter 281A gives the Commission jurisdiction over elected and appointed public officers and public employees whose conduct is alleged to have violated the provisions of NRS Chapter 281A. See NRS 281A.280. Accordingly, the Commission has jurisdiction over Reese in this matter.

3. **PROCEDURAL HISTORY BEFORE COMMISSION**

- A. On or about March 18, 2024, the Commission received Ethics Complaint No. 24-036C, alleging that Reese had violated NRS 281A.400(2) because he received unwarranted privileges and advantages by receiving reimbursement for improper travel.
- B. On or about April 22, 2024, the Commission received Ethics Complaint No. 24-050C, alleging the same unwarranted privileges and advantages for Reese as were alleged in Complaint No. 24-036C.
- C. On May 1, 2024, the Commission accepted jurisdiction of both Complaints and consolidated the two Complaints pursuant to NAC 281A.260.
- D. On May 2, 2024, the Executive Director issued a notice to Reese regarding the consolidated Complaints, provided notice of additional issues and facts related

- to NRS 281A.400(9), and provided Reese with a deadline to provide a response.
- E. Pursuant to the *Notice*, Reese was provided an opportunity to submit a written response to the Complaint and through his counsel, Rick R. Hsu, Esq. of Maupin Cox LeGoy, provided a written response on or about July 10, 2024.
 - F. On September 17, 2024, the Executive Director presented a recommendation relating to just and sufficient cause to a three-member review panel pursuant to NRS 281A.720.
 - G. In a Panel Determination issued on September 18, 2024, the Panel made a determination, following review of the Executive Director's recommendation, Reese's response, and evidence obtained at the time, that just and sufficient cause existed to refer the matter to the Commission.
 - H. Reese waived the statutory timeframes for an adjudicatory hearing in order to schedule a settlement conference.
 - I. On December 20, 2024, the Executive Director and Reese, represented by counsel, participated in a global settlement conference regarding this Complaint and an unrelated earlier matter. The settlement conference did not result in resolution of the Complaint.
 - J. On January 23, 2025, the Executive Director and counsel for Reese attended a scheduling conference with Commission Counsel.
 - K. On April 24, 2025, Commission Counsel issued a Discovery and Scheduling Order and the parties subsequently engaged in the discovery process.
 - L. On August 11, 2025, the Executive Director took the depositions of Reese and former Reno City Manager Doug Thornley. Based on additional corroborating evidence, the Executive Director concludes that the preponderance of the evidence shows Reese did not violate the Ethics Law in this matter.
 - M. In lieu of an adjudicatory hearing before the Commission, the Executive Director and Reese now enter into this Stipulated Agreement.

4. STIPULATED FACTS: At all material times relevant to the allegations in this matter, the Commission's Executive Director and Reese agree to the following facts:¹

- A. Reese was first appointed to the Reno City Council in 2019 and subsequently elected to the position in 2020 and 2024.
- B. Upon taking office Reese was never provided travel or other fiscal procedures training from the City of Reno.
- C. City Council members do not have their own staff but have access to various liaisons and administrative staff to help collect, compile, and process travel documentation.
- D. Every travel request and expense report is signed and verified as true and accurate by the City Councilmember and approved by the City Manager.
- E. During 2022 and 2023, Reese traveled on behalf of the City of Reno to the following conferences and meetings:
 - i. International City/County Management Association (ICMA), September 17-21, 2022.
 - ii. National League of Cities, November 17-19, 2022.
 - iii. International LGBTQ+ Leaders Conference, November 30-December 3, 2022.
 - iv. Swearing in of Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, January 3, 2023.
 - v. Kennedy School Leadership Seminar, July 10-28, 2023.
 - vi. International LGBTQ+ Leaders Conference, November 30 – December 2, 2023.
- F. For each of these trips, Reese completed and signed the appropriate travel forms and expense reports, and then-City Manager Doug Thornley approved the travel and expenses.
- G. In February of 2024, a news article published about City travel identified various questions about the propriety of Reese's and other city officials' travel.
- H. Upon release of the news article, Reese asked then-City Manager Doug Thornley to review the travel issues presented in the article.

¹ Stipulated Facts do not constitute part of the "Investigative File" as that term is defined by NRS 281A.755. All statutory and common law protections afforded to the Investigative File shall remain and are not affected by this Stipulated Agreement.

- I. It was communicated to Reese that a review of his travel determined the City owed him funds but that they were unable to pay him. A review of the same documents by other City staff came to a different conclusion, raising questions about the applicability of certain travel and training policies.
- J. No payments were transferred to or from the City or Reese in relation to the questioned travel payments, and then-City Manager Thornley made the ultimate decision to reaffirm his earlier approvals of the travel expenses and reimbursements.
- K. The documentation obtained through records requests during the Executive Director's investigation eliminated concerns regarding the ICMA trip from September 17-21, 2022.
- L. During depositions in the discovery phase of the proceedings, Reese provided all relevant information and subsequently provided documentation to confirm that he was at all times traveling in the performance of his duties as a City Councilmember.
- M. The City's lobbyist in Washington DC provided a sworn declaration confirming the deposition testimony of Reese. Moreover, Reese provided additional documentation to support his declaration.
- N. The new information included explanations and documentation to justify the travel as follows:
 - i. League of Cities – event invitations showing relevant meetings and work in Kansas City on November 16, 2022, including a meeting sponsored by the National League of Cities on the impacts of corporate landlords in local housing markets and one day appropriately charged as a travel day (November 15).
 - ii. LGBTQ+ Conference 2022 – two days of time scheduled for meetings with Congressional representatives (November 28 and 29) and one day appropriately charged as a travel day (November 27).
 - iii. Swearing-in of Catherine Cortez Masto – two days of time scheduled for meetings with Congressional representatives (January 4 and 5, 2023).

- iv. Kennedy School – two days of appropriate pre-event travel given the length of educational course and distance from Reno (July 8 and 9, 2023)
 - v. LGBTQ+ Conference 2023 – two days of time scheduled for meetings with Congressional representatives (November 28 and 29) and one day appropriately charged as a travel day (November 27).
- O. As a result of the testimony and newly provided documentation, each day of travel was properly accounted for and tied to aims and goals of the City of Reno.
- P. The investigation and discovery revealed that Reese did participate in some personal activities such as visiting an event for his child who also happened to be in Washington DC and sightseeing including DC monuments and museums. Public officers are not required to forego all non-government activities while traveling for official business; however, great care should be taken to ensure that their focus is official business. See *In re Gullett*, Review Panel Determination, Case No. 19-067C (2020); *In re Jara*, Review Panel Determination, Case No. 19-113C (2020).
- Q. Councilmember Reese has implemented a changed approach to travel in light of evolving practices and varied reviews of travel activities, ensuring even greater alignment with current policy and best practices.

5. TERMS / CONCLUSIONS OF LAW: Based on the foregoing, Reese and the Commission agree as follows:

- A. Each of the stipulated facts enumerated in Section 4 of this Stipulated Agreement is agreed to by the parties.
- B. Reese, as a public officer, was required to comply with the Nevada Ethics Law and has done so. The Commission expressly concludes that **no violations occurred**.
- C. The Commission is without jurisdiction to make a determination regarding the strict applicability or adherence to City travel and fiscal policies unless facts separately implicate the Nevada Ethics Law. Then-City Manager Thornley

made the ultimate decision to approve and reaffirm the travel expenses based on his application and interpretation of the City travel policy.

- D. Allegations that Reese violated NRS 281A.400(2) and (9) and NRS 281A.685 are hereby dismissed for lack of sufficient evidence to support a violation by a preponderance of the evidence. See *In re Gullett*, Review Panel Determination, Case No. 19-067C (2020) (no just and sufficient cause to find violation of NRS 281A.400(2) for travel expenses); *In re Jara*, Review Panel Determination Case No. 19-113C (2020) (no just and sufficient cause to find violation of NRS 281A.400(2) for travel expenses); *In re Jara*, Review Panel Determination Case No. 20-043C (2021) (no credible evidence of attempting to influence a subordinate); *In re Hawkes*, Case No. 01-08B (2002) (no credible evidence of attempting to influence a subordinate).
- E. The Commission further acknowledges that Councilmember Reese fully cooperated throughout the investigation and discovery process, providing detailed testimony, documentation, and third-party confirmations.
- F. The investigation was thorough and comprehensive, lasting a significant period of time to ensure a complete and fair review.
- G. The City of Reno has updated its travel policies and review procedures during this period, and the Commission acknowledges that these changes, combined with Councilmember Reese's cooperation and adjustments, negate any need for a letter of instruction or caution to accompany this dismissal.
- H. The Commission takes its oversight role seriously for the benefit of the public, and in this case, the process has demonstrated that the allegations were unfounded.
- I. This dismissal is entered with prejudice, fully resolving all allegations in Ethics Complaints Case Nos. 24-036C and 24-050C.
- J. This agreement is intended to apply to and resolve only this specific proceeding before the Commission and is not intended to be applicable to or create any admission of liability for any other proceeding, including administrative, civil, or criminal, regarding Reese.

6. **WAIVER**

- A. Reese knowingly and voluntarily waives his right to an adjudicatory hearing before the full Commission on the allegations in Ethics Complaint, Case Nos. 24-036C and 24-050C, and all rights he may be accorded with regard to this matter pursuant to the Ethics Law (NRS Chapter 281A), the regulations of the Commission (NAC Chapter 281A), the Nevada Administrative Procedures Act (NRS Chapter 233B) and any other applicable provisions of law.
- B. Reese and the Executive Director knowingly and voluntarily waive their rights to any judicial review of this matter as provided in NRS Chapter 281A, NRS Chapter 233B or any other applicable provisions of law.

7. **ACCEPTANCE:** We, the undersigned parties, have read this Stipulated Agreement, understand each and every provision therein, and agree to be bound thereby. The parties orally agreed to be bound by the terms of this agreement during the regular meeting of the Commission on September 3, 2025.²

DATED this 26th day of August, 2025.



Devon Reese, Esq.
City Councilmember

DATED this 26th day of August, 2025.

FOR DEVON REESE,
Subject



Rick R. Esq.
Counsel for Subject

DATED this 26th day of August, 2025.



Ross E. Armstrong, Esq.
Executive Director
Nevada Commission on Ethics

² Subject waived any right to receive written notice pursuant to NRS 241.033 of the time and place of the Commission's meeting to consider his character, alleged misconduct, professional competence, or physical or mental health.

Approved as to form by:

FOR NEVADA COMMISSION
ON ETHICS

DATED this 23rd day of September, 2025.

/s/ Elizabeth J. Bassett
Elizabeth J. Bassett, Esq.
Commission Counsel

The above Stipulated Agreement is accepted by the majority of the Commission.³

DATED this 23rd day of September, 2025.

NEVADA COMMISSION ON ETHICS

By: /s/ Scott Scherer
Scott Scherer, Esq.
Chair

By: /s/ John T. Moran
John T. Moran, III Esq.
Commissioner

By: /s/ John Miller
John Miller
Commissioner

By: /s/ Brianna Smith
Brianna Smith, Esq.
Commissioner

Vice Chair Wallin and Commissioner Lowry, dissenting:

We believe making the decision today to dismiss this matter is premature. Reese insisted that this case be presented while the Commission lacked access to its full set of files due to a cyberattack. A full review of documentation received in this case by Commissioners would have been more appropriate.

We are concerned that Reese failed to provide this newly produced exculpatory evidence during the investigatory phase, despite repeated requests that he do so. Had Reese produced the documents when requested, the investigation regarding the two complaints filed regarding Reese by two different requesters could have been kept confidential by the Commission under the Ethics Law.

Reese instead refused to provide any documents, even in response to discovery served by the Executive Director, until a Motion to Compel was granted by the Commission Chair requiring production of the requested documents by Reese and the Ethics Law's confidentiality provisions no longer applied. The documents were finally provided to the Executive Director and the Commission more than a year after they were first requested from Reese.

³ Commissioner Reynolds participated in the Review Panel hearing and Commissioner Langton abstained from participation under Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2.11, and are therefore precluded from participating in the Commission's consideration of this Stipulated Agreement pursuant to NRS 281A.220(4).

Reese did not address the Commission during its public consideration of either of the two agenda items relating to complaints filed against him, which he could have done. Had he done so, however, he may have been required to answer questions from Commissioners about his actions and his failure to cooperate in these matters. Instead, he waited until public comment to launch an unjustified and misleading attack on the Commission and its staff for which he could not be questioned by Commissioners and about which the record could not be corrected.

While we defend Reese's right to comment on his case, we would be remiss if we did not condemn his unwarranted, misleading and unprofessional attack on the Executive Director and the work of the Ethics Commission. The tone and tenor of the remarks were unbecoming an elected official. In what can only be described as a rant, Reese played the victim in a case that could have been resolved a year ago in his favor had he cooperated with the investigation. Similar cases are routinely dismissed at the review panel stage. The delays in this case were entirely of Reese's own making.

We accept debate, disagreement and contrary interpretations of law and fact. What we do not accept is a lack of civility or candor and personal attacks.

For these reasons, we dissent.

By: /s/ Kim Wallin
Kim Wallin, CPA, CMA, CFM
Vice Chair

By: /s/ Teresa Lowry
Teresa Lowry, Esq.
Commissioner