



CITY COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DEPARTMENT: Administration

DATE: August 26, 2025

SUBJECT: Motion to approve the payment of attorney's fees to Tonja Haddad Coleman, Esq. in the amount of \$4,342.50, pursuant to Sec. 111.07, F.S., for Ms. Coleman's representation of Commissioner Shrouder, as a result of the dismissal of Ethics Complaint No. 25-032.

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION:

The City Manager and the City Attorney recommend the approval of the payment of attorney fees to Tonja Haddad Coleman, Esq., in the amount of \$4,342.50 for Ms. Coleman's representation of Commissioner Shrouder in Ethics Complaint No. 25-032, which was dismissed by the Florida Commission on Ethics on July 30, 2025.

BACKGROUND OF ITEM:

On or about January 29, 2025, a complaint (Complaint No. 25-032) was filed with the Florida Commission on Ethics ("FCE") against Commissioner Shrouder, which included certain allegations related to actions allegedly taken by the commissioner in his official capacity. While the complaint was confidential at the time of filing, the commissioner consulted with the city attorney and retained independent legal counsel to represent him in the matter.

On July 30, 2025, the FCE entered a public report (attached) finding that there was "no probable cause" to believe that the commissioner violated Section 112.313(6), F.S., by corruptly using or attempting to use his official position to secure a special privilege, benefit, or exemption for himself or another, as alleged. Accordingly, the complaint was dismissed by the FCE.

In accordance with Sec. 111.07, F.S., the commissioner is entitled to the payment of his reasonable attorney's fees by the City. The City Attorney's Office has reviewed the fees charged by Ms. Coleman and believes that they are reasonable for the services rendered.

On a related note, in reviewing this matter, the City Manager and the City Attorney observed that the City does not have a code provision providing for the indemnification of its public officials and employees, including the reimbursement of attorneys' fees for claims brought against such individuals in their official capacity. While there is an entitlement to such fees under Florida Law, it is relatively common for municipalities to have code provisions establishing a process for such

indemnification and reimbursement. The City Attorney's Office will work with the City Manager to bring back an ordinance at a later date for consideration by the City Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This line item will be over budget due to our lobbyist increasing his monthly fee by an additional \$1,000/month. Additionally, our expenditures from Klausner, Kaufman, Jensen & Levinson regarding the BSO Pension have nearly doubled our \$60,000 budget.

It is forecasted that our surplus from the City Attorney line item will more than cover this deficit in our Legal Department Budget.

<u>General Ledger Acct. Number</u>	<u>Budgeted Amount</u>	<u>Requested Amount</u>	<u>Remaining Amount</u>
001-150-531159-514	\$108,000	-\$4,342.50	-\$37,680.25

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Florida Commission on Ethics Public Report
2. Tonja Haddad Coleman invoice