

VIRGINIA :

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF FAIRFAX

VIRGINIA STATE BAR EX REL.  
FIFTH DISTRICT, SECTION II COMMITTEE  
VSB DOCKET NO. 24-052-129978

Complainant,

v.

Case No. 2024-11028

JOSEPH ANTHONY CERRONI, JR.

Respondent.

**ORDER APPROVING AGREED DISPOSITION**  
**(One-Year and One-Day Suspension)**

On July 15, 2025, the parties appeared before a Three-Judge Court duly impaneled pursuant to Section 54.1-3935 of the Code of Virginia (1950) as amended, consisting of the Honorable Jeffrey P. Bennett, Judge of the Twenty-Fourth Judicial Circuit, the Honorable Dennis M. Martin, Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, and the Honorably Kimberly A. Irving, Judge of the Thirty-Frist Judicial Circuit and designated chief judge (collectively, "the Court").

Senior Assistant Bar Counsel Elizabeth K. Shoenfeld represented the Virginia State Bar ("VSB"). Respondent Joseph A. Cerroni, Jr., having received proper notice, appeared in person at all times throughout the proceeding and was represented by Jon F. Mains.

The Chief Judge swore the court reporter, and each member of the Court verified that he or she had no personal or financial interest that might affect or reasonably be perceived to affect their ability to be impartial in this matter.

WHEREUPON a hearing was conducted upon the Rule to Show Cause issued on August 6, 2024 against Respondent. The Rule directed Respondent to appear and to show cause why his

license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia should not be suspended, revoked, or otherwise sanctioned in accordance with Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia by reason of the allegations of ethical misconduct set forth in the Certification issued on May 22, 2024.

During the hearing, the VSB, Respondent, and Respondent's counsel reached a proposed Agreed Disposition regarding the allegations of misconduct and sanction. The proposed Agreed Disposition, which is set forth in detail below, was presented to the Court, which, after due deliberation, approved the Agreed Disposition.

The Agreed Disposition is as follows:

#### I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to the Virginia State Bar ("VSB") in 1980. At all relevant times, Respondent was a member of the VSB.
2. Respondent has practiced real estate law in Virginia for about 30 years.
3. This matter involves Respondent's preparation and notarization of a purported Deed of Gift ("Deed of Gift") for a residence located at 14212 Ferndale Road in Woodbridge, Virginia ("Ferndale Road property"), as well as his involvement in settlement negotiations regarding the Ferndale Road property.
4. As of June 14, 2018, Mian Imran ("Imran") had title to the Ferndale Road property.
5. As of March 29, 2021, Imran had a mortgage on the Ferndale Road property in the approximate amount of \$200,000.<sup>1</sup>
6. On or about March 29, 2021, at the request of Imran's brother Mian Amer ("Amer"),<sup>2</sup> Respondent prepared a Deed of Gift purporting to gift the Ferndale Road property from "Mian IMRAN, sole owner" to "AM Estate LLC, a Virginia limited liability company" ("Deed of Gift").
7. AM Estate LLC, which received its Certificate of Organization just four days earlier, on March 25, 2021, was formed and owned by Amer and his wife Saira Riaz ("Riaz").

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<sup>1</sup> The 2021 tax assessment for the Ferndale Road property was \$366,200.

<sup>2</sup> Respondent had known Amer for about 10 years and done prior legal work on Amer's behalf.

8. The Deed of Gift contained a purported signature for Imran; however, Imran stated that he never signed the Deed of Gift.

**WITNESS the following signature(s) and seal(s):**

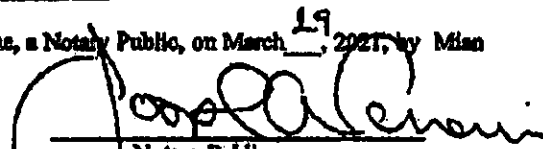
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mian Imran, Grantor (Seal)

9. Respondent notarized the Deed of Gift as follows:

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**  
**COUNTY OF FAIRFAX:**

**Acknowledgement**

This Deed was acknowledged before me, a Notary Public, on March 19, 2021, by Mian Imran, Grantor.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 9/30/24



10. Despite Respondent's representation on the Acknowledgement that the Deed of Gift was "acknowledged before me," Imran did not acknowledge the Deed of Gift before Respondent.
11. As of March 25, 2021, Respondent had never met with, spoken to, or corresponded with Imran.
12. On May 24, 2021, National Settlement Services ("NSS") recorded the deed.
13. On June 11, 2021, AM Estate LLC transferred the Ferndale Road property to Amer and Riaz. Amer and Riaz borrowed \$211,425 against the Ferndale Road property in June 2021. In September 2021, Amer and Riaz opened a home equity line of credit against the Ferndale Road property in the amount of \$136,500. Respondent was not involved in these transactions.

14. On September 6, 2022, Detective Crowley of the Prince William County Police Department contacted Respondent regarding the Deed of Gift. Respondent emailed a statement to Detective Crowley.
15. Respondent wrote that Amer had requested a deed of gift to transfer property from Amer's name to his LLC. Respondent said that the office policy when notarizing a deed is that a driver's license is required unless the notarization is for a previous client who is known, and "I (Respondent) did not require a driver's license since I knew [Amer]."
16. On or about March 1, 2023, arrest warrants were issued to Amer for charges of forgery, obtaining money by false pretense, and uttering.
17. On or about July 24, 2023, at a preliminary hearing, the presiding judge dismissed those charges for lack of probable cause.
18. On or about September 12, 2023, Imran filed a bar complaint against Respondent regarding Respondent's notarization of the deed.
19. The bar complaint was referred for investigation and a subpoena duces tecum was issued to Respondent. In response to the subpoena, Respondent produced a "Deed Order Form" that was filled out by hand. At the bottom of the Deed Order Form, Respondent wrote "NSS to Record – HOLD/ID."
20. During a subsequent interview with VSB Investigator Matthew Foley ("Investigator Foley"), Respondent stated that "NSS to Record" meant that National Settlement Services ("NSS") would record the deed, and "HOLD/ID" meant that NSS would not record the deed until it received a copy of the grantor's identification, such as a driver's license.
21. Brad Hoopes, the owner of NSS, stated that NSS does not require a copy of the grantor's identification to record a deed.
22. In January 2023, a meeting was held at the office of Syed Hussain ("Hussain"), a mutual acquaintance of Imran and Amer. The purpose of the meeting was to attempt to resolve outstanding issues between Imran and Amer.
23. Respondent, Hussain, Imran's sister Tahmina Proulx ("Proulx"), and Imran's father Mian Saleem ("Saleem") attended the meeting in person. Neither Imran nor Amer attended this meeting.
24. Hussain hired Respondent to draft a settlement agreement between Imran and Amer. Respondent drafted a proposed settlement agreement, which was never signed by the parties. Respondent also offered comments on a settlement agreement drafted by a different attorney.

## II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

**RULE 1.7 Conflict of Interest: General Rule**

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), a lawyer shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest. A concurrent conflict of interest exists if:

(2) there is significant risk that the representation of one or more clients will be materially limited by the lawyer's responsibilities to another client, a former client or a third person or by a personal interest of the lawyer.

*By participating in settlement negotiations seeking to resolve the issues between Amer and Imran, including the alleged theft of the Ferndale Road property, even though Respondent had prepared and notarized the deed transferring the Ferndale Road property from Imran to AM Estate LLC, Respondent accepted a representation where there was a significant risk that the representation would be materially limited by his personal interests, in violation of Rule 1.7(a)(2).*

\* \* \* \* \*

**RULE 8.1 Bar Admission And Disciplinary Matters**

An applicant for admission to the bar, or a lawyer already admitted to the bar, in connection with a bar admission application, any certification required to be filed as a condition of maintaining or renewing a license to practice law, or in connection with a disciplinary matter, shall not:

(a) knowingly make a false statement of material fact[.]

*By telling Investigator Foley that NSS policy required him to present the grantor's identification to record a deed, even though NSS owner Hoopes denied the existence of such a*

*policy and Respondent had told Detective Crowley that identification was not required in this situation, Respondent violated Rule 8.1(a).*

\* \* \* \* \*

**RULE 8.4 Misconduct**

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

(a) violate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another[.]

*By drafting and notarizing the Deed of Gift at Amer's request, even though Amer had no legal right to gift the property to his LLC, Respondent's conduct assisted Amer and Riaz in acquiring title to the property in violation of Rule 8.4(a).*

**III. DISPOSITION**

Accordingly, bar counsel and Respondent tendered to the Court and the Court approved the Agreed Disposition of a one-year and one-day suspension as representing an appropriate sanction if the hearing of this matter were to be concluded.

It is hereby ORDERED that Respondent's license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia be, and the same hereby is, SUSPENDED for a period of ONE YEAR AND ONE DAY, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 14, 2025.

It is further ORDERED that Respondent must comply with the requirements of Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13-29 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Respondent must forthwith give notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, of the Suspension of his license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia, to all clients for whom Respondent is currently handling matters and to all opposing attorneys and presiding judges in pending litigation.


Respondent must also make appropriate arrangements for the disposition of matters then in Respondent's care in conformity with the wishes of his clients. Respondent must give such notice immediately and in no event later than 14 days from the effective date of the Suspension, and make such arrangements as are required herein as soon as practicable and in no event later than 45 days from the effective date of the Suspension. Respondent must also furnish proof to the VSB within 60 days of the effective date of the Suspension that such notices have been timely given and such arrangements made for the disposition of matters.

It is further ORDERED that, if Respondent is not handling any client matters on the effective date of the Suspension, Respondent must submit an affidavit to that effect to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System of the VSB. Issues concerning the adequacy of the notice and arrangement required by Paragraph 13-29 must be determined by the VSB Disciplinary Board, or, if demanded pursuant to Paragraph 13-29, another three-judge Circuit Court, which may impose a sanction of Suspension or Revocation for failure to comply with these requirements.

It is further ORDERED that the Clerk of the Disciplinary System of the VSB must assess all costs pursuant to Paragraph 13-9.E.

It is further ORDERED that the Clerk must send a copy teste of this order to Joseph A. Cerroni, Jr., Respondent, at 5033-B Backlick Road, Annandale, Virginia 22003; to Jon F. Mains, Jon F. Mains & Associates, LLC, 3955 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, VA 22030; to Elizabeth K. Shoenfeld, Senior Assistant Bar Counsel, Virginia State Bar, 1111 E. Main St., Suite 700, Richmond, VA 23219; and to Joanne Fronfelter, Clerk of the Disciplinary System, Virginia State Bar, 1111 E. Main St., Suite 700, Richmond, VA 23219.

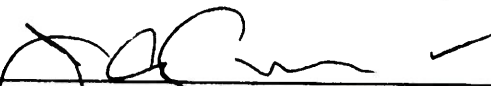
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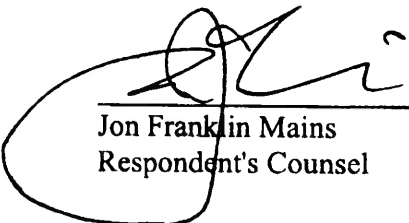
  
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The Honorable Kimberly Irving  
Designated Chief Judge

We ask for this:

*alleged*

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Elizabeth K. Shoenfeld  
Senior Assistant Bar Counsel

  
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Joseph Anthony Cerroni, Jr.  
Respondent

  
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Jon Franklin Mains  
Respondent's Counsel