

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
SARA DANIELLE VAUGHN

VSB Docket No. 26-032-136602

**SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION
(PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS)**

On March 19, 2026, and April 23, 2026, meetings were held in this matter before a duly convened Third District, Section II, Subcommittee consisting of Erika Encinas MacCormac, Esq, Chair; Brian Lawrence Buniva, Esq., Member; and Vanessa Griggs, Lay Member. During the meeting, the Subcommittee voted to approve an agreed disposition for a Public Reprimand with Terms pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.B.4. of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The agreed disposition was entered into by the Virginia State Bar, by Jessica C. Beatty, Assistant Bar Counsel, Sara Danielle Vaughn (“Respondent”), and Respondent’s counsel, Paulo Emilio Franco, Jr.

WHEREFORE, the Third District, Section II, Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon Respondent the following Public Reprimand with Terms:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in Virginia in 2017 and has been a member of the VSB since that time. Respondent is not admitted to practice law in South Carolina.
2. On November 25, 2020, Kirk Bowden (“Bowden”) retained Respondent to represent him in a real estate litigation in South Carolina. Bowden signed an hourly fee agreement with Respondent and paid an advanced fee of \$3,500.00.

3. When Bowden hired Respondent, Respondent had a solo practice. During the representation, Respondent joined the law firm of Friedman, Framme, and Thrush (“FFT”).

4. Respondent associated with local counsel in South Carolina, Complainant Aaron Kozloski (“Kozloski”). On June 16, 2021, Respondent filed a Verified Application for Admission Pro Hac Vice in the State of South Carolina with the South Carolina Supreme Court, with Kozloski’s signature and consent as local counsel.

5. On September 8, 2021, at Respondent’s direction, Kozloski filed an Action to Quiet Title in the Horry County Court (“the Court”) on Bowden’s behalf.

6. On September 10, 2021, Kozloski filed a Motion to Admit Sarah D. Vaughn Pro Hac Vice. On January 10, 2022, the Court entered an Order admitting Respondent pro hac vice in Bowden’s case.

7. Respondent signed a motion and an order in the case, which were filed on February 28, 2022, and January 26, 2023. Respondent was also listed as “Attorney for Plaintiff” on other pleadings and motions filed by Kozloski on April 11, 2022, and June 7, 2022.

8. On February 10, 2023, Respondent participated in a mediation with Kozloski and Bowden. The mediation did not result in a signed settlement agreement.

9. On February 10, 2023, the mediator submitted to the Court, with copies to counsel of record, including Respondent, a document entitled “Proof of ADR or Exemption.” In the Proof of ADR or Exemption, the mediator noted that the case was not resolved and recommended that Respondent and Kozloski, as Bowden’s counsel, furnish Defendant’s counsel with a signed purchase instrument for the property in question and that mediation be continued to a time after that document had been furnished by Plaintiffs’ counsel to Defendant’s counsel.

Respondent did not do so.

10. After the February 10, 2023, mediation, Respondent did not contact Kozloski. Kozloski attempted to contact Respondent shortly after the mediation to discuss obtaining the signed purchase instrument but was unable to reach her.

11. Respondent did no further work on the case after the mediation, including finalizing work related to the mediation or preparing the case for trial. Respondent did not withdraw as counsel.

12. On March 25, 2024, the Court issued a Notice of Case Scheduling, which was mailed to Respondent. On April 22, 2024, the Notice was returned to the Court as undeliverable.

13. Kozloski was unable to get in touch with Respondent or Bowden to schedule the case for trial at the Court's demand.

14. On April 2, 2024, with agreement of defendant's counsel, Kozloski filed a Stipulation Pursuant to Rule 40(j) SCRCP ("Stipulation") to remove the matter from the Court's active docket, and the Court removed the case from the active trial docket.

15. On July 10, 2024, Respondent sent Bowden an email, which attached a letter purporting to terminate the representation. Respondent stated in her email, "Please read the attached letter and call me if you have any questions." Respondent stated in her letter "I am writing to inform you that I will be departing Friedman, Framme & Thrush, P.A. on July 12, 2024. Unfortunately [sic], after my departure, there will be no other attorneys remaining in the Virginia office who can continue handling your legal representaiton [sic]."

16. Respondent's letter further stated, "I advise that you retain new counsel as soon as possible to avoid any disruption in your legal representation. Although I will no longer be involved after my departure from the firm, I will make myself available as necessary during this transition process."

17. Respondent did not copy Kozloski on her email or letter and again did not withdraw as counsel or change her address of record with the Court.

18. On or about July 12, 2024, Respondent left FFT. She did not change her address of record with the Court, nor did she provide Kozloski with Bowden's contact information.

19. Bowden sent Respondent a text message on July 15, 2024, stating "Hey saw your letter that your [sic] leaving the law firm! Hope everything is well knowing you im [sic] sure it's for bigger and better!" Respondent did not reply.

20. After receiving Respondent's letter, Bowden contacted FFT. Bowden requested and obtained contact information for Kozloski.

21. Bowden called Kozloski, who informed Bowden that he could not get in touch with Respondent and updated Bowden about the status of the case. On April 2, 2025, with Bowden's permission, Kozloski filed a motion to have the case restored to the docket in order to move forward with Bowden's requests for relief from the Court.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Pursuant to Virginia Rule of Professional Conduct 8.5(b)(1), because Respondent appeared pro hac vice before a South Carolina court, the South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct govern Respondent's conduct. Virginia Rule of Professional Conduct 8.5(b)(1) provides as follows: "for conduct in connection with a proceeding in a court, agency, or other tribunal before which a lawyer appears, the rules to be applied shall be the rules of the jurisdiction in which the court, agency, or other tribunal sits, unless the rules of the court, agency, or other tribunal provide otherwise."

The foregoing conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct ("SCRPC"):

Rule 1.3 Diligence.

A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

By failing to take any steps to advance Bowden's case after the February 10, 2023, mediation, including obtaining the documentation requested by the mediator or otherwise preparing the case for trial;

By failing to keep her address of record updated with Court so that she could remain reasonably informed about the status of the case; and

By abandoning representation of her client,

Respondent violated SCRPC 1.3.

Rule 1.4 Communication.

(a) A lawyer shall

(3) keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter.

By failing to communicate with Bowden at any time from February 10, 2023, until July 10, 2024, after she had decided to leave the law firm, including by both failing to give Bowden any updates regarding the status of his case and notify Bowden of the Notice of Case Scheduling issued by the Court; and

By failing to provide Bowden with Kozloski's contact information,

Respondent violated SCRPC 1.4(a)(3).

Rule 1.16 Declining or Terminating Representation.

(c) A lawyer must comply with applicable law requiring notice to or permission of a tribunal when terminating a representation. When ordered to do so by a tribunal, a lawyer shall continue representation notwithstanding good cause for terminating the representation.

By constructively terminating the representation of Bowden without requesting or obtaining leave of court to withdraw as counsel of record, notifying Bowden or Kozloski, and serving written notice, as required by South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure 5 and 11(b),

Respondent violated SCRPC 1.16(c).

III. PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Subcommittee to impose a Public Reprimand with Terms. The terms shall be met by September 30, 2026, and are as follows:

1. On or before September 30, 2026, Respondent will complete six (6) hours of continuing legal education credits by attending courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of legal ethics. In addition, Respondent will attend the Virginia State Bar's Harry L. Carrico Professionalism Course. Respondent's attendance obligations set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify her compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Bar Counsel, promptly following her attendance of each such CLE program(s).

If any of the terms are not met by the time specified, pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.F of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the District Committee shall hold a hearing and Respondent shall be required to show cause why a District Committee should not certify this matter to the Disciplinary Board for determination of a sanction. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed.

Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-9.E. of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

**THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR**


Erika Encinas MacCormac
Subcommittee Chair

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on April 28, 2026, a true and complete copy of the foregoing Subcommittee Determination was sent to Sara Danielle Vaughn, Respondent, by counsel to Paulo Emilio Franco, Jr., ThompsonMcMullan, P.C., 100 Shockoe Slip, 3rd Floor Richmond, Virginia 23219, and by email to pfranco@t-mlaw.com; and to Respondent by first class mail to 2500 E Cary Street, Apt 304, Richmond, Virginia 23223-7863, Respondent's last address of record with the Virginia State Bar.



Jessica C. Beatty
Assistant Bar Counsel

VIRGINIA:

**BEFORE THE THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR**

**IN THE MATTER OF
SARA DANIELLE VAUGHN**

VS B Docket No. 26-032-136602

**AGREED DISPOSITION
PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH TERMS**

Pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.B.4, the Virginia State Bar (“VSB”), by Jessica C. Beatty, Assistant Bar Counsel, Sara Danielle Vaughn (“Respondent”), and Paulo Emilio Franco, Jr., Respondent’s counsel, enter into the following agreed disposition arising out of this matter.

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in Virginia in 2017 and has been a member of the VSB since that time. Respondent is not admitted to practice law in South Carolina.

2. On November 25, 2020, Kirk Bowden (“Bowden”) retained Respondent to represent him in a real estate litigation in South Carolina. Bowden signed an hourly fee agreement with Respondent and paid an advanced fee of \$3,500.00.

3. When Bowden hired Respondent, Respondent had a solo practice. During the representation, Respondent joined the law firm of Friedman, Framme, and Thrush (“FFT”).

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Pursuant to Virginia Rule of Professional Conduct 8.5(b)(1), because Respondent appeared pro hac vice before a South Carolina court, the South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct govern Respondent's conduct. Virginia Rule of Professional Conduct 8.5(b)(1) provides as follows: "for conduct in connection with a proceeding in a court, agency, or other tribunal before which a lawyer appears, the rules to be applied shall be the rules of the jurisdiction in which the court, agency, or other tribunal sits, unless the rules of the court, agency, or other tribunal provide otherwise."

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Respondent violated SCRPC 1.4(a)(3).

Rule 1.16 Declining or Terminating Representation.

(c) A lawyer must comply with applicable law requiring notice to or permission of a tribunal when terminating a representation. When ordered to do so by a tribunal, a lawyer shall continue representation notwithstanding good cause for terminating the representation.

By constructively terminating the representation of Bowden without requesting or obtaining leave of court to withdraw as counsel of record, notifying Bowden or Kozloski, and serving written notice, as required by South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure 5 and 11(b),

Respondent violated SCRCP 1.16(c).

III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Assistant Bar Counsel and Respondent tender to a subcommittee of the Third District, Section II Committee for its approval the agreed disposition of a Public Reprimand with Terms as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the Third District, Section II Committee. The terms shall be met by September 30, 2026, and are as follows:

1. On or before September 30, 2026, Respondent will complete six (6) hours of continuing legal education credits by attending courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of legal ethics. In addition, Respondent will attend the Virginia State Bar's Harry L. Carrico Professionalism Course. Respondent's attendance obligations set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify his compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Bar Counsel, promptly following his attendance of each such CLE program(s).

If any of the terms are not timely met, Respondent agrees that the District Committee shall impose a Certification for a Sanction Determination pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.F of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter, and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia.


If the agreed disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

Pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-30.B of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Respondent's prior disciplinary record shall be furnished to the subcommittee considering this agreed disposition.

VIRGINIA STATE BAR



Jessica C. Beatty
Assistant Bar Counsel



Sara Danielle Vaughn
Respondent



Paulo Emilio Franco, Jr.
Respondent Counsel



RECEIVED
Apr 28, 2026
VIRGINIA STATE BAR
CLERK'S OFFICE

Virginia State Bar

THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II COMMITTEE

PLEASE REPLY TO:
Joanne Fronfelter, Clerk
1111 East Main Street, Suite 700
Richmond, Virginia 23219-0026

April 28, 2026

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL & EMAIL

Sara Danielle Vaughn
2500 E Cary St., Apt. 304
Richmond, VA 23223-7863
sdv293@gmail.com

Certified Article Number
9414 7266 9904 2248 6767 07
SENDER'S RECORD

Re: In the Matter of Sara Danielle Vaughn
VSB Docket No. 26-032-136602

Dear Ms. Vaughn:

Enclosed is a Subcommittee Determination (Public Reprimand with Terms) hereby served on you by the Third District, Section II Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar.

Please be aware that this disposition will become a part of your disciplinary record.

Pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraphs 13-15.F and 13-15.G of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, if you fail to comply with the terms by the dates indicated in the Subcommittee Determination, the alternative disposition may be imposed. Imposition of the alternative sanction may involve a public show cause notice and a public hearing pursuant to Part Six, Section IV, Paragraphs 13-15.F and 13-16.BB of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Sincerely,


Erika Encinas MacCormac
Subcommittee Chair

Enclosure

cc: Paulo Emilio Franco, Jr., Respondent's Counsel
Aaron Joel Kozloski, Complainant
Joanne Fronfelter, Clerk of the Disciplinary System

Jessica C. Beatty, Assistant Bar Counsel
Rob Baker, Investigator