

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In the Court of Appeals

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APPEAL FROM HORRY COUNTY  
Court of Common Pleas

Edward B. Cottingham, Circuit Court Judge

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Case No. 2010-CP-26-07961

**Appellate Case No. 2013-001759**

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South Carolina Department of Transportation ..... *Respondent,*

v.

David Franklin Powell ..... *Appellant.*

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**[INITIAL] BRIEF OF APPELLANT**

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## I. STATEMENT OF ISSUES ON APPEAL

- A. Did the Circuit Court err in determining the holding in Tallent and Hardin<sup>1</sup> prevents the consideration of access damages to remaining property in eminent domain actions?
- B. Was the reference below that the “Department could have eliminated the intersection without taking land from Mr. Powell” supported by *any* evidence before the court?

## II. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On August 27, 2010, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (“SCDOT,” “Condemnor,” or “Respondent”) filed a lawsuit against Landowner David F. Powell in order to take a portion of his real property (zoned highway commercial) as part of the highway project Condemnor deemed the “Interchange at US 17 Bypass and SC 707/Farrow Parkway.” (Condemnation Notice, March 14, 2013 Appraisal of Corbin Haskell.) Prior to the condemnation, Mr. Powell’s property had a “clear view” from Hwy. 17 By-Pass and was accessible from Hwy. 17 via Emory Road. (Haskell Deposition of March 25, 2013, Pages 25 and 38.) As a result of the SCDOT’s condemnation action, the intersection at Hwy. 17 and Emory Road was closed and Mr. Powell’s property was left accessible via a frontage road that one could enter from Hwy. 17 one (1) mile to the north. (Haskell Deposition of March 25, 2013, Pages 32 and 33.)

After completing mediation and discovery, this case was set for date-certain trial on March 11, 2013 before the Honorable Benjamin Culbertson. (Culbertson

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<sup>1</sup> Hardin v. S.C. Dep’t of Transp., 371 S.C. 598, 641 S.E.2d 437 (2007).

Order dated March 11, 2013.) Prior to the start of the trial, counsel for the SCDOT informed counsel for Mr. Powell there had been a change in the road plan. (Culbertson Order dated April 26, 2013.) As a result of the change, the frontage road would no longer extend to the entrance one (1) mile north, but would dead-end as a cul-de-sac just north of Mr. Powell's land. (Haskell Deposition of March 25, 2013, Pages 32 and 33.) According to the SCDOT's Rule 30(b)(6), SCRCP witness, Mike Barbee, in order to access Mr. Powell's tract after the plan change, a motorist must travel 2.24 miles. (Barbee Deposition of March 25, 2013, Page 8.) Moreover, the pathway to Mr. Powell's property is no longer obvious at all; whereas his tract was historically accessible in a visible, *typical* manner, in the *after* condition the property is only accessible *indirectly*, and the route of access is not visible to northbound travelers on Hwy. 17 By-pass. (Haskell Deposition of March 25, 2013, Page 42; Barbee Deposition of July 1, 2011, Pages 52 and 53.)

On Condemnor's Motion, rather than starting the trial as scheduled, Judge Culbertson permitted SCDOT five (5) days to revise its appraisal report to reflect the change to the plans and the court simultaneously continued the case for trial beginning on April 1, 2013. (Order Continuing Case, dated 4-26-13.) On Friday, March 14, 2013, the SCDOT tendered the revised appraisal report of Corbin Haskell outlining his opinion of just compensation under the changed plans pursuant to which SCDOT took a portion of Landowner's real property. (Appraisal of Corbin Haskell dated March 14, 2013.) Whereas Mr. Haskell had assessed no damages at all to

Mr. Powell's remaining property in any of his three (3) earlier reports, in his fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) report Mr. Haskell, as Condemnor's real estate valuation expert, determined Mr. Powell's remaining property had been damaged Fifty percent (50%) as a result of the take, and determined the just compensation to which Mr. Powell was entitled totaled Five Hundred and Seventeen Thousand and no/100 (\$517,000.00) Dollars. (Haskell Deposition dated March 25, 2013, Pages 51-53.)

One week later, ten (10) days prior to the scheduled start of trial, counsel for SCDOT submitted yet *another* appraisal report of Corbin Haskell. (Haskell Deposition dated March 25, 2013, Landowner's Ex. 5.) This *fifth* (5<sup>th</sup>) report was tendered to the Landowner's counsel on March 21, 2013, which was beyond the time limit permitted by Judge Culbertson. On the cover of this report, Mr. Haskell printed the following disclaimer:

I have been requested to revise my appraisal since legal counsel advises that the reconfiguration of the roadways does not constitute damages to the remainder in this case. Therefore, there are no damages to the subject. . . .

(Appraisal of Corbin Haskell dated March 14, 2013, Page 1.) Mr. Haskell goes on to set forth his appraisal of just compensation for the land SCDOT physically took from Mr. Powell and, as in his first three (3) reports, determined there were no damages to the remainder of Mr. Powell's land, per Condemnor's instruction. (Haskell Deposition March 25, 2013, Pages 29 and 30.)

Thereafter, on March 25, 2013, Condemnor filed a Motion in limine to exclude any reference at trial, by either the Condemnor or the Landowner, to diminution in value to the Landowner's remaining property as a result of changes in access. (Condemnor's March 25, 2013 Motion.) Judge Cottingham heard argument and entered Exhibits into the record on April 1, 2013, which was to have been the first day of the trial of the action below. From the bench, Judge Cottingham held, *inter alia*:

Now, in this case, it is clear to me that reasonable jury would find that there is a consider[able] loss in the after [sic].

(Hearing Transcript, Page 42.)

Judge Cottingham further stated:

It is clear to me that there would be some diminution in value. Now, whether that's payable under Hardin and Tallent is a different issue. I don't think it is, but I'll let the Supreme Court deal with it and they can overrule or modify it. But in fairness to the landowner, there is some diminution in value.

(Hearing Transcript, Page 43.)

Judge Cottingham continued:

I think my ruling will be on the issue of admissibility of evidence, which is a partial summary judgment which is in and of itself immediately appealable.

(Hearing Transcript, Pages 45 and 46.)

Finally, Judge Cottingham made clear:

THE COURT: Well, that's why I want my – in fairness to the landowner and, you, sir, I want my order to provide that I would conclude that there is diminution in value, clearly.

MR. BELLAMY: I understand.

THE COURT: **You can agree with that I'm sure, Mr. McCutcheon?**

MR. MCCUTCHEON: **Yes, sir.**

(Transcript, Page 46.) (Emphasis Added.)

Immediately following the above exchange, counsel for Condemnor converted its Motion in Limine to a Motion for Partial Summary Judgment as to the admission of evidence at trial regarding the diminution in value of Landowner's remaining property resulting from the reduction of access to Landowner's property caused by the taking of his property for the underlying road project. (Hearing Transcript, Page 45.) Judge Cottingham then instructed counsel for SCDOT, Jack McCutcheon, to prepare an Order and continued the case for trial. (Hearing Transcript, Page 46.) This appeal followed. (Notice of Appeal)

### III. STANDARD OF REVIEW

This is an appeal of the grant of a Motion for Partial Summary Judgment. "When reviewing the grant of a summary judgment motion, appellate courts apply the same standard that governs the trial court under Rule 56(c), SCRCP, which provides that summary judgment is proper when there is no genuine issue as to any material

fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” USAA Prop. & Cas. Ins. Co. v. Clegg, 377 S.C. 643, 653-54, 661 S.E.2d 791, 796 (2008), citing Rule 56(c), SCRPC; Helms Realty, Inc. v. Gibson-Wall Co., 363 S.C. 334, 340, 611 S.E.2d 485, 488 (2005); and, Fleming v. Rose, 350 S.C. 488, 493, 567 S.E.2d 857, 860 (2002). “On appeal from an order granting summary judgment, the appellate court will review all ambiguities, conclusions, and inferences arising in and from the evidence in a light most favorable to the non-moving party below.” Id., citing Willis v. Wu, 362 S.C. 146, 151, 607 S.E.2d 63, 65 (2004).

“Summary judgment is not appropriate where further inquiry into the facts of the case is desirable to clarify the application of the law.” Clegg (citing Middleborough Horizontal Prop. Regime Council of Co-Owners v. Montedison S.p.A., 320 S.C. 470, 479, 465 S.E.2d 765, 771 (Ct.App.1995) (citing Baugus v. Wessinger, 303 S.C. 412, 401 S.E.2d 169 (1991))). “Even when there is no dispute as to evidentiary facts, but only as to the conclusions or inferences to be drawn from them, summary judgment should be denied.” Id., (citing Nelson v. Charleston County Parks & Recreation Comm'n, 362 S.C. 1, 5, 605 S.E.2d 744, 746 (Ct.App.2004)). In the present matter, the issue is the dollar amount of just compensation due Landowner David Powell following the involuntary acquisition of his real property by SCDOT through exertion of its power of eminent domain. All the particulars of the property must be presented to the jury in order for the jury to determine the true value of Landowner’s property and any damages to his remaining property, as required by law.

S.C. Code Ann. § 28-2-370 (1976). This value, as with all real property, includes ease of access to and from the property; and, it was erroneous to prevent the jury from due analysis of these factors.

#### IV. ARGUMENT

**A. The trial court erroneously determined the South Carolina Supreme Court holding in Hardin/Tallent<sup>2</sup> prevents the consideration of access damages to remaining property in eminent domain actions.**

This action was initiated by the South Carolina Department of Transportation in order to acquire from Landowner David Powell 0.183 acres of his property referred to by SCDOT for the purpose of the “Interchange at US 17 Bypass and SC 707/Farrow Parkway” project as “Tract 13.” (Condemnation Notice.) Notably, SCDOT, on the face of the Condemnation Notice, demanded a trial by jury, not the Landowner as indicated in the Order below. (Condemnation Notice, Order) As a result of the condemnation of his property, Mr. Powell will lose northbound access along Socastee Highway. That road will now terminate north of Tract 13 in a cul-de-sac. Also, the historic access to Hwy. 17, via Emory Road (along side tract 13), will be closed to allow for the elevation of Hwy. 17 resulting from the same road project. The issue of admissibility of evidence relating to the substantially increased remoteness and complexity of access to Tract 13 resulting from the road project

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<sup>2</sup>Hardin v. S. Carolina Dep't of Transp., 371 S.C. 598, 641 S.E.2d 437 (2007).

necessitating this action is essential to the determination of just compensation in this condemnation action and is the subject of the present appeal.

### **I. Evidence of Just Compensation**

In order to value property affected by a highway project, the market value in the *before* and *after* conditions must be ascertained. Market value is defined in the SCDOT appraisal as:

The most probable price, as of a specified date, in cash, or in terms equivalent to cash, or in other precisely revealed terms, for which the specified property rights should sell after reasonable exposure in a competitive market under all conditions requisite to a fair sale, with the buyer and seller each acting prudently, knowledgeably, and for self-interest, and assuming that neither is under undue duress.<sup>3</sup>

Landowner David Powell's property was zoned Highway Commercial as of the date of the take in this matter. (March 14, 2013 Appraisal of Corbin Haskell, Page 4.) It is axiomatic that any knowledgeable purchaser of highway commercial property will diligently investigate the ease of access to and from a parcel prior to making a purchase and the price such a purchaser would be willing to pay for the tract will necessarily depend, in part, upon the tract's ease of access. To suggest the government may take real property from tax payers and residents of its state who are unwilling to sell their land voluntarily and then avoid payment for *any* diminution

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<sup>3</sup> March 14, 2013 appraisal of Corbin Haskell, Page 4. Citing The Dictionary of Real Estate Appraisal, 4th Edition.

caused to remaining property as a result of the taking is not consistent with the Constitutional mandate of just compensation.

South Carolina's Eminent Domain Procedure Act, S.C. Code Ann. §28-2-30 instructs that the "provisions of this chapter shall constitute the exclusive procedure whereby condemnation may be undertaken in this State." The Act thereafter defines, at § 28-2-370, the proper evidentiary considerations when determining just compensation in *all* actions where private property is taken by the government for a public purpose:

In determining just compensation, only the value of the property to be taken, ***any* diminution in the value of the landowner's remaining property**, and ***any*** benefits as provided in Section 28-2-360 may be considered. (Emphasis added).

Had the South Carolina General Assembly intended to prevent consideration of *any* particular evidence of diminution in value to the remaining property, it could have plainly inserted such a limitation in the Eminent Domain Procedure Act, S.C. Code Ann. §§ 28-2-10 *et seq.* (1976). Our legislature inserted no such language; instead, it created a statute designed to place the property owner in the same position financially following the taking of his land as he enjoyed prior to the government taking. As our Supreme Court has repeatedly explained:

The cardinal rule of statutory construction is to ascertain and effectuate the intent of the legislature. Charleston County Sch. Dist. v. State Budget and Control Bd., 313 S.C. 1, 437 S.E.2d 6 (1993). Under the plain meaning rule, it is not the court's place to change the meaning of a clear and unambiguous statute. In re Vincent J., 333 S.C. 233, 509 S.E.2d 261 (1998) (citations omitted). Where the statute's language is

plain and unambiguous, and conveys a clear and definite meaning, the rules of statutory interpretation are not needed and the court has no right to impose another meaning. Id. at 233, 509 S.E.2d at 262 (citing Paschal v. State Election Comm'n, 317 S.C. 434, 454 S.E.2d 890 (1995)). “What a legislature says in the text of a statute is considered the best evidence of the legislative intent or will. Therefore, the courts are bound to give effect to the expressed intent of the legislature.” Norman J. Singer, Sutherland Statutory Construction § 46.03 at 94 (5th ed. 1992) (Emphasis added).

Hodges v. Rainey, 341 S.C. 79, 85, 533 S.E.2d 578, 581 (2000).

The General Assembly’s approach in this regard has been long-followed in South Carolina, and upholds the “just” compensation requirements of the Fifth Amendment of the U. S. Constitution and Article I, § 13 of South Carolina’s Constitution.<sup>4</sup> As explained by the South Carolina Court of Appeals in S.C. Dep’t of Transp. v. Faulkenberry, 337 S.C. 140, 522 S.E.2d 822 (Ct. App. 1999):

In order for the landowner to be compensated fully, the government must “put the owners in as good position pecuniarily as if the use of their property had not been taken. They are entitled to have the full equivalent of the value of such use at the time of the taking paid contemporaneously with the taking.” Phelps v. United States, 274 U.S. 341, 344, 47 S. Ct. 611, 71 L.Ed. 1083 (1927). See also Stewart & Grindle, Inc. v. State, 524 P.2d 1242 (Alaska 1974); State Roads Comm’n v. G.L. Cornell Co. Sav. & Profit Sharing Trust, 85 Md. App. 765, 584 A.2d 1331 (1991).

Faulkenberry, 387 S.C. at 148, 522 S.E.2d at 826.

The record below is clear that neither the Condemnor nor the Court sought to fully restore Mr. Powell to the pecuniary position he maintained prior to the

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<sup>4</sup>USCA CONST Amend. V-Just Compensation; S.C. Const. Art. I, § 13.

acquisition of his property. Judge Cottingham found and Counsel for SCDOT concurred that SCDOT's taking necessarily caused a diminution in value to Mr. Powell's remaining property. (Hearing Transcript, Page 46.)

In order to be certain the government fully and justly compensates private property owners from whom it takes real property, the full analysis of the property's value in the *before* condition and in the *after* condition must be presented at trial. This is the only manner in which "just compensation" can be properly identified. This is further clarified in S.C. State Highway Dep't v. Wilson, 254 S.C. 360, 175 S.E.2d 391 (1970):

'In other words, he is entitled to full compensation for the taking of his land **and all its consequences**; \* \* \* nor is there any requirement that the damage be special and peculiar, or such as would be actionable at common law; it is enough that it is a consequence of the taking. The entire parcel is considered as a whole, and **the inquiry is, how much has the particular public improvement decreased the fair market value of the property, taking into consideration the use for which the land was taken and All the reasonably probable effects of its devotion to that use.**' (Emphasis added.)

Id. at 367-68, 175 S.E.2d at 395.<sup>5</sup> (Quoting from S.C. State Highway Dep't v. Bolt, 242 S.C. 411, 131 S.E.2d 264 (1963).

The SCDOT relied heavily at the hearing below upon the holding in Hardin v. S. Carolina Dep't of Transp., 371 S.C. 598, 641 S.E.2d 437 (2007). Based upon its reliance on Tallent/Hardin, the Condemnor admittedly instructed its appraiser to

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<sup>5</sup> 18 Am. Jur. *Eminent Domain* § 265, p. 905.

disregard the effects of the cul-de-sac and the closure of Emory Road. In SCDOT appraiser Corbin Haskell's March 25, 2013 deposition, the following exchange took place regarding his determination of the value of just compensation to be paid to Landowner David Powell:

Q: Then drop down. You notice under easements and encroachments: "It should be noted that I am not qualified to detect easements and encroachments, and legal counsel should be retained if there are any indications of title defects."

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And that's why you have yielded to Mr. McCutcheon on the question of the closing of Emory Road and the cul de sac on Socastee —

A: Yes, sir.

Q: --- Boulevard? Okay. But he has given you no written opinion as to why you should disregard the loss of access to Highway 17 on Emory Road or the cul de sac?

A: What do you mean written opinion?

Q: Written you a letter or ---

A: No, sir.

Q: --- memorandum or such?

A: No, sir.

Q: Has he told you orally what his position is?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Tell me what that is.

A: Just quoted some law as, which I can't recall.

MR. McCUTCHEON: I told him about Talent [sic] and Hardin —

(Deposition of Corbin Haskell dated March 25, 2013, Pages 29 and 30.)

SCDOT's reliance on Tallent/Hardin is misguided. The **entire** analysis in Tallent/Hardin was to determine *whether* a taking had occurred. In each of the cases decided in the Tallent/Hardin opinion, no physical appropriation of property took place. Both of the plaintiffs in those inverse condemnation cases complained of reconfiguration of the road system near their respective property, but neither had sustained any actual government taking of their physical property. The legal analysis throughout Tallent/Hardin was to determine *whether* any of the plaintiffs' property rights had been taken, such that those plaintiffs would be permitted access to a court of law to seek redress for their pecuniary loss. As has been explained by one commentator:

The tests adopted by the U.S. Supreme Court to determine a taking focus upon the severity of the burden that the government imposes upon private property rights. Physical takings require compensation because of the unique burden they impose: **a permanent physical invasion, however minimal, eviscerates the owner's right to exclude others from entering and using his or her property--perhaps the most fundamental of all property interests.** Lingle v. Chevron U.S.A. Inc., 544 U.S. 528 (2005).

Richard Davis Bybee, Recent Inverse Condemnation Cases, S.C. Law., May 2007, at 24, 27 (emphasis added).

Likewise, the Court in Hilton Head Automotive, LLC v. S.C. Dep't of Transp., 394 S.C. 27, 714 S.E.2d 308 (2011), considered similar claims and explained the appropriate analysis in such cases thusly:

Following Hardin, a proper analysis of an **inverse** condemnation claim premised on an *alleged physical taking* **must begin with a determination of the scope of the property rights** at issue. 371 S.C. at 605, 609, 641 S.E.2d at 441, 443 (explaining that a court evaluating an inverse condemnation claim premised on a physical taking should “focus ... on a landowner’s actual property interests; that is, his easements”). As an abutting property owner, HHA had “an easement for access” to Highway 278, “regardless of whether [it had] access to and from an additional public road.” Id. at 606, 641 S.E.2d at 442. In addition, HHA had “an easement for access to and from the public road system.” Id. FN3 **If governmental action materially injured either of these easements, such that HHA no longer enjoyed the reasonable means of access to which it was entitled, a physical taking has occurred.**FN4 E.g., S.C. State Highway Dep't v. Allison, 246 S.C. 389, 393, 143 S.E.2d 800, 802 (1965) (“[A]n obstruction that materially injures or deprives the abutting property owner of ingress or egress to and from his property is a ‘taking’ of the property, for which recovery may be had.”); Sease v. City of Spartanburg, 242 S.C. 520, 524–25, 131 S.E.2d 683, 685 (1963) (“The protection of [the South Carolina “takings” clause] extends to all cases in which any of the essential elements of ownership has been destroyed or impaired as the result of the construction or maintenance of a public street.”); Brown v. Hendricks, 211 S.C. 395, 403–04, 45 S.E.2d 603, 606–07 (1947) (“The accessibility of one’s property may in some instances constitute a great part of its value, and to permit a

material impairment of his access would result in the destruction of a great part of the value ... and his property is therefore as effectually taken as if a physical invasion was made thereon and a physical injury done thereto.” (quoting with approval Foster Lumber Co. v. Arkansas Valley & Western Ry. Co., 20 Okla. 583, 95 P. 224, 228 (1908)).

FN3. In *City of Rock Hill v. Cothran*, this Court also recognized an abutter's right to proceed upon the abutting road to the next intersection. 209 S.C. 357, 369, 40 S.E.2d 239, 244 (1946) (“[T]he right of an abutting landowner to passage at least to the next intersection is a substantial property right ....”); see also *Powell v. Spartanburg County*, 136 S.C. 371, 374–76, 134 S.E. 367, 368 (1926) (holding that, where a portion of a road was formally discontinued and a new road was built to route traffic around the discontinued portion such that the two roads formed a semicircle pattern, property owners abutting on the old road “could not rightfully be deprived of the privilege of still using it to reach the newly located portion [of the road] *in either direction*,” and therefore, nonsuit was improper where access to the new road was cut off at the south end of the old road, even though the new road was accessible from the north end of the old road (emphasis added)). While *Hardin* overruled *Cothran* in certain respects, it did not expressly overrule the existence of this property right. We take no position regarding the status of this right, as HHA has not lost the ability to proceed upon Highway 278 to the next intersection. (Emphasis added.)

FN4. Certain language in *Hardin* might suggest this “material injury” test is no longer good law. We take this opportunity to clarify. The “material injury” test is firmly rooted in our jurisprudence, and *Hardin* did not overrule this well-established aspect of our takings analysis. *See Hardin*, 371 S.C. at 609, 641 S.E.2d at 443 (“We therefore overrule the ‘special injury’ analysis ... and specify that our focus in these cases is on how any road re-configuration affects a property owner’s easements.”);

id. at 609 n. 4, 641 S.E.2d at 443 n. 4 (“[N]either landowner ... has been *deprived* of ingress or egress ... *nor* have these landowners *been injured* in their ability to enter or exit their property.” (emphasis added)).

Hilton Head Automotive, 394 S.C. at 30–32, 714 S.E.2d at 310–11 (emphasis added).

Both Hardin and Hilton Head Automotive explain that in an inverse case, the *first step* is to look at the property right the plaintiff held prior to the government action for which the plaintiff complained. Then, to determine *whether* the government action materially injured the property right such that the plaintiff “no longer enjoyed reasonable means of access to which it was entitled.” Hilton Head Auto., 394 S.C. 27, 31, 714 S.E.2d 308, 310 (2011). ***If these conclusions are affirmatively determined, then a physical taking has occurred.***

This analysis is entirely unnecessary in cases brought by the government to condemn private property. In those instances, a physical taking occurred upon the filing of the Condemnation Notice and all elements of damage must be considered by the trial court if any private property owner is to be left in the after in the same position pecuniarily as he was in the before. As noted by the aforementioned commentator:

It is important to remember that the Hardin decision is an inverse condemnation action, not a direct condemnation action. In a direct condemnation action, a taking has already been established and the only issue is valuation. The distinction between direct and inverse condemnation cases is that in direct cases there is no need to show special injury, only that the damage is a consequence of the taking. South Carolina State Highway Dep’t. v. Bolt, 242 S.C. 411, 131 S.E.2d 264, 267 (1963). The reason for the distinction is that a taking has

occurred and the General Assembly addressed how just compensation is to be determined in direct eminent domain actions. S.C. Eminent Domain Procedure Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 28-2-370 (2007). Section 370 of the Act provides compensation for “any” diminution in value of the remaining property. The condemnation cases interpreting this statute have adopted the “all consequences of the taking” standard. Bolt, 131 S.E.2d at 267.

Richard Davis Bybee, Recent Inverse Condemnation Cases, S.C. Law., May 2007, at 29 (emphasis added).

Any analysis that does not take into account *each* element of value of the land taken both before and after the condemnation *cannot* render just compensation and fails to meet the requirements of the Eminent Domain Procedure Act, the South Carolina Constitution, and the United States Constitution. Accordingly, Landowner David Powell respectfully requests reversal of the decision below.

**ii. The March 14, 2013 SCDOT Appraisal**

On March 14, 2013, the SCDOT produced to the Landowner a revised appraisal (hereinafter referred to as “the March 14, 2013 Report”) report from the witness SCDOT listed as its appraisal expert. This report was the first appraisal SCDOT produced following the revelation that the frontage road would no longer connect Landowner’s property to the North, but, instead, would terminate at a cul-de-sac shortly beyond Landowner’s property line. This report, along with Landowner’s appraisal report, assessed damages to Landowner’s property resulting from the reconfiguration of access to his property. Although Landowner’s and SCDOT’s respective appraisers disagree as to the total amount due the Appellant as just

compensation for the condemnation of his property, each of these two reports, and only these two reports, contains a full and fair analysis of “any diminution in the value of the landowner’s remaining property” caused by the present condemnation action. S.C. Code Ann. § 28-2-370.

Respondent’s motion for partial summary judgment below, which is the subject of the present appeal, sought to exclude from the jury both the SCDOT’s and the Landowner’s conclusions as to the diminution in value caused to Landowner’s remaining property. SCDOT, in this report, at Paragraph 9, indicated the highway-commercially-zoned subject property was valued at Nine Hundred and Sixty-Three Thousand and No/100 (\$963,000.00) Dollars as of the date of the filing of the Condemnation Notice *prior* to the construction of the interchange at the back gate for which the Condemnation Notice was filed. However, the report also concluded the property was only worth Four Hundred and Forty-Six Thousand and No/100 (\$446,000.00) Dollars, as of the very same date, *following* the construction of the interchange.

The diminution in value, constituting just compensation, totaled Five Hundred and Seventeen Thousand and No/100 (\$517,000.00) Dollars. According to the March 13, 2013 Report, at Paragraph 31, Seventy-Two Thousand and No/100 (\$72,000.00) Dollars of just compensation was attributed to the land which SCDOT physically appropriated in the take. The remaining Four Hundred and Forty-Six Thousand and No/100 (\$446,000.00) Dollar diminution in value to the Landowner’s property was

entirely due to damages to the Landowner's remaining property resulting from the reconfiguration of access. This, according to the SCDOT appraiser, represented a Fifty percent (50%) diminution in value of the property Landowner David Powell retained after SCDOT condemned a portion of his property for the construction of the interchange.

The appraiser for the SCDOT himself fully explained his analysis in his report and in his deposition. Notably, he even went to the trouble of locating paired sales in order to specifically quantify the diminution in value of the property in the *after* condition. In Mr. Haskell's deposition on March 25, 2013, Mr. Haskell testified:

Q: "After the acquisition, the subject will have similar access to Sale "C"; however, the subject will maintain its exposure along Highway 17, thus an adjustment slightly less than fifty-three percent is appropriate. Based on the paired sales data analysis, after the acquisition, a fifty percent downward adjustment is reasonable." So you're giving the benefit to Mr. Powell's tract of land?

A: That's correct.

Q: And this is your work product that you did and assembled on your own volition acting as an appraiser in evaluating the take and damages?

A: That's correct.

Mr. Haskell continued:

Q: So you indicated the difference of \$517,000, which as I read your report, it's 72,000 for the take and 445,000 for damages to the remainder?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And that was your opinion when you signed this report on March 14, 2013?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: All right, sir. And if you went to trial tomorrow morning, and this appraisal was determined by the court to be relevant, this would still be your opinion?

A: Yes, sir.

(Haskell Deposition dated March 25, 2013, Pages 51, 52, and 53.)

Clearly, until Mr. Haskell was instructed by his client's attorney to disregard the reconfiguration of access to Tract 13 directly resulting from the interchange project, he was prepared to testify under oath, as Condemnor's expert as to property value, that Mr. Powell's remaining property had been damaged by Fifty percent. Notably, not only did Mr. Haskell determine in his report that the remainder had been damaged by Fifty percent (50%), but he considered "Access/Frontage/Exposure" in determining the property value and the appropriate adjustments to be made to other

properties in order to make them more comparable to the subject. (March 14, 2013 Appraisal of Corbin Haskell, Page 21.)

**B. The reference in the Order below that the “Department could have eliminated the intersection without taking land from Mr. Powell” is not supported by *any* evidence before the court and should be remanded to the trial court for proper evidentiary consideration.**

In stating the “Department could have eliminated the intersection without taking land from Mr. Powell,” the trial court established an inference that could erroneously distinguish the closure of the Emory Rd. intersection with Hwy. 17 and the creation of the cul-de-sac on Socastee Hwy. from the highway project for which this action was filed. (Order, Page 4.) This inference was: (1) not sought by the Condemnor’s Motion nor argued by Condemnor at the hearing below; (2) not stated by the court in the hearing below; and, (3) not specifically enumerated as a holding in the Order below. Neither is it supported by *any* evidence in the record below. In his deposition on March 25, 2013, Mike Barbee testified as the SCDOT engineer as follows:

Q: And who is constructing the cul de sac?

A: The cul de sac will be constructed by the DOT and the county’s contractor, which is Balfour Beaty Infrastructure.

Q: Okay. And is that being constructed with the Ride on a Penny Fund?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Okay. So that's part of the construction project that you've called the interchange at Highway 17 and Farrow Parkway?

A: Yes, sir.

(Deposition of Mike Barbee dated March 25, 2013, Pages 8 and 9.)

This interchange project is part of the group of highway projects funded by a "One-Cent Capital Projects Sales Tax" that was approved by Horry County voters in the referendum of November 7, 2006.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the plan sheet depicting the cul-de-sac and Emory Rd. closure (which appears in both the appraisal report Condemnor seeks to suppress from evidence and the appraisal report which Condemnor seeks to present to the jury at trial in place of the one it seeks to suppress from evidence) is clearly labeled as a plan sheet for this same interchange project. (Appraisal of Corbin Haskell dated March 14, 2013, Page 11.) This interchange project has closed an intersection that had been open for decades. There is not one scintilla of evidence in this record to support any inference other than: were it not for the interchange project, the intersection would never have been eliminated.

As the Wilson case correctly noted:

While the construction of a median, with nothing more, may very well be an exercise of the police power with no resulting compensable damage to an abutting property owner, in the instant case the proposed median is only an incidental part of the overall Department plans and contemplated construction. There is no suggestion of the need for, or the contemplated construction of, a median

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ridingonapenny.com>

except as an incidental part of the major relocation and construction plans of the Department. But for such overall construction and relocation, and condemnation under the power of eminent domain for such purposes, there would have been no median and, of course, no damage to the abutting landowner. It logically follows, we think that any damage attributable to the planned median is an incidental result of the exercise of the power of eminent domain, and under these circumstances we know of no sound reason for departing from the established rule in this State, which is as follows:

“The entire parcel is considered as a whole, and the inquiry is, how much has the particular public improvement decreased the fair market value of the property, taking into consideration the use for which the land was taken and all the reasonably probable effects of its devotion to that use.” South Carolina State Highway Dep’t v. Bolt, . 242 S.C. 411, 131 S.E.2d 264 (1963).

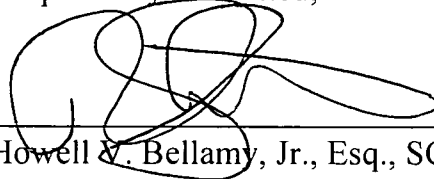
The implication of the trial court’s unsupported statement is that the present condemnation is somehow unrelated to the project listed in the caption of the Condemnation Notice itself. The only evidence in the record on this issue is directly contrary to this inference; and, nothing in the record before this court supports the statement in the order or its inference. Accordingly, Landowner David Powell respectfully requests this Court reverse the trial court as to this issue and remand the case for trial by jury to determine, once evidence has been proposed and considered, whether the involuntary acquisition of Landowner’s property was “an incidental part of the major relocation and construction plans of the Department” as was the case in Wilson. The “trial judge simply did not have any evidence to support” the inference

of the statement his order. Brown v. Johnson, 276 S.C. 68, 72, 275 S.E.2d 876, 878 (1981).

## V. CONCLUSION

Once the government takes the *extreme* step of seizing private property, it should be held to a heightened standard and forced to leave the private property owner in as good a position pecuniarily as he was before his land was taken. Anything less fails to secure just compensation and to permit the government to avoid the requirement that private property owners be made whole is to return the citizenry to a time in history when private property owners rightly feared the government they fund. Accordingly, Landowner David Powell respectfully requests this Court reverse the holding below and remand this case for trial on the merits to include full and fair consideration of “any diminution in value to the landowner’s remaining property,” including *any* diminution caused by reconfiguration of access.

Respectfully submitted,



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