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SC Court of Appeals

The STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM HORRY COUNTY

Honorable David P. Caraker Jr., Circuit Court Judge

Case No. 2025-000445

Sam Investment Properties LLC.,

n/k/a Archangel Investments LLC.,

Respondent,

v.

Stephanie Hatton and Brandon Deubell,

Appellants'

APPELLANTS RESPONSE TO RESPONDENTS REPLY BRIEF

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Table of Contents

Reply to Respondent’s Statement of Facts.....1,2
Failed to raise objections2
The Respondent's Non-Preservation Claims Are Abandoned.....3,4,5
Preservation of Arguments in Appellate Brief.....5

Rent (\$1,300 Award)

1.Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as Appellants Vacated by July 3, 2022, Before Any Default, Terminating the Lease [Appellant Brief, p. 14].....5,6
2.Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as the June 2022 Eviction Was Not for Non-Payment, Rendering July Non-Payment Impossible [Appellant Brief, p. 15].....6,7
3.Title: Even if the Lease Was Not Terminated in June, the \$1,300 Award Is Erroneous, as Re-Rental Proceeds Fully Mitigated All Rent Losses After Eviction, and the Award Results in Impermissible Double Recovery [Appellant Brief, p.16].....7,8
4.Title The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as the Landlord’s Discretionary Termination in June 2022 Absolved Appellants of Future Rent Obligations, and Double Recovery Bars Recovery [Appellant Brief, p. 18]..8,9

II. AC/Heater Unit (\$495.72 Award)

5.Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Relying on Inconsistent and Unreliable Testimony [Appellant Brief, p. 20].....9,10
6.Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Relying on Testimony Over Photographic

| | |
|---|--------|
| Evidence [Appellant Brief, p 21] | 10, 11 |
| 7. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Finding Non-Adjustable Temperature [Appellant Brief, p. 22]..... | 11,12 |
| 8. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Holding Appellant Liable for Essential Units [Appellant Brief, p. 22]..... | 12,13 |
| 9. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding Unsubstantiated Damages [Appellant Brief, p. 23]..... | 13 |
| III. Painting and Cleaning (\$1,800 award)..... | 14 |
| 10. Title: The Apartment’s Condition Pre-Existed the Appellant’s Tenancy and Showed Signs of Normal Wear and Tear [Appellant Brief, p. 24]..... | 14 |
| 11. Title: Three Witnesses Negate Respondent’s Uncorroborated Odor Claim [Appellant Brief, p. 25]..... | 14,15 |
| 12. Title: Non-Itemized and Undisclosed Awards Lack Credible Evidence and Prejudiced the Appellants [Appellant Brief, p. 25]..... | 15,16 |
| 13. Title: Landlord’s Failure to Maintain HVAC System Negates Tenant Liability for Painting Award [Appellant Brief, p. 26]..... | 16,17 |
| IV. Counterclaim for Restitution..... | 17 |
| 14. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Failing to Award Triple the Security Deposit Under S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(b) for Respondent’s Failure to Provide Itemized Notice Within Thirty Days [Appellant Brief, p. 2..... | 17,18 |
| No Rule 59(e) Motion Was Required for Issues Ruled Upon..... | 18 |
| Conclusion..... | 19 |

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Statutes

| | |
|---|---------|
| S.C. R. Civ. P. 59(e) | 18 |
| (Motion to alter or amend a judgement) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 22-3-10..... | 4,5,19 |
| (Jurisdictional limits) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 22-3-10(1) | 1 |
| (Magistrate court jurisdictional limit) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410..... | 4,5 |
| (Security deposit and damages) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(a) | 1 |
| (Landlord duties and time lines Security Deposit) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(b)..... | 2,17,19 |
| (Security deposit, including treble damages for wrongful withholding) | |
| S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-510 | 4,5 |
| (Tenant obligations for maintenance and normal wear and tear) | |
| SCACR Rule 208(b)(1)(E) | 5 |
| (Reply Brief requirements for arguments and citations) | |
| SCACR Rule 208(c) | 5 |
| (Limited scope of response in sur-reply or oral arguments) | |
| SCACR Rule 210(b) | 4 |
| (Improper Designation request for Record on Appeal) | |
| SCRE Rule 103(a)(1) | 2 |

(Timely and specific objection to preserve an issue)

Case Law

Elam v. S.C. Dep't of Transp., 361 S.C. 9, 602 S.E.2d 772 (2004).....3,18

(Case potentially cited by the respondent regarding Rule 59(e) motions)

First Sav. Bank v. McLean, 314 S.C. 361, 363, 444 S.E.2d 513, 514 (1994).....3

(Case reinforcing the abandonment of issues not specifically supported)

Green v. Baughman, 214 S.C. 101, 51 S.E.2d 366 (1948).....1-2

(jurisdictional issues)

Herron v. Century BMW, 395 S.C. 461, 465, 719 S.E.2d 640 (2011).....2,3,5,18

(Case supporting leniency for pro se litigants on preservation issues)

Humbert v. State, 345 S.C. 332, 337, 548 S.E.2d 862(2001).....1,2

(Case supporting preservation when the court rules on an objection)

Hunt v. S.C. Forestry Comm'n,358 S.C. 564, 573, 595 S.E.2d 846, 851(Ct. App. 2004).4

(Case holding that failure to brief an issue raised by an appellant constitutes abandonment)

State v. Dunbar, 356 S.C. 138, 142, 587 S.E.2d 691, 694 (2003).....3,4,5,19

(Case supporting the abandonment of issues not argued in a brief)

State v. Freiburger, 366 S.C. 125, 135, 620 S.E.2d 737,742 (2005).....5

(Case on judicial disapproval of procedural gamesmanship)

State v. Russell, 345 S.C. 128, 546 S.E.2d 202 (Ct. App. 2001).....2

(Case supporting that a pro se objection can be sufficient in context)

Staubes v. City of Folly Beach, 339 S.C. 406, 529 S.E.2d 543 (2000).....5

(Case supporting the preservation rule)

Reply to Respondent's Statement of Facts

The respondent's Statement of Facts misleads this Court by misrepresenting the rent claim, falsely denying Ms. Hatton's objections, and omitting the improper filing in the Court of Common Pleas. First, the respondent claims they sought \$5,316.44, including one month's rent (\$1,300) (Tr. 12:6), but their December 20, 2022, complaint sought \$14,766.44, including \$11,700 for nine months' rent (March 2022 – November 2022) (Respondent Original Complaint), despite the property being re-rented on August 1, 2022, at \$1,500/month, limiting any rent claim to July 2022 (\$1,300) per S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(a). (Tr.11:2-3, 19; 15-16). Only at trial did they reduce the rent claim, concealing their initial overreach. Appellants denied owing rent post-eviction and disputed damages as exaggerated or double-billed (Appellant Answer to Complaint, Tr. 67:14 - 76:25). Second, the respondent falsely claims Appellants "failed to raise any objections ruled upon during the trial" (Tr. 3 - 78). Appellant Stephanie Hatton, pro se, objected to Exhibit 2 (Respondent Check Exhibit 2, canceled checks and AC receipt), challenging its relevance and authenticity (Tr. 13:16 - 15:4), which the court noted and overruled (Tr. 15:12-15), preserving the issue per *Humbert v. State*, 345 S.C. 332, 337, 548 S.E.2d 862(2001). The respondent's complaint sought \$14,766.44, including an inflated \$11,700 for nine months' rent (March–November 2022) (Respondent Original Complaint), despite knowing the property was re-rented by August 1, 2022, at \$1,500/month (Tr. 19:15–20:2). This misrepresentation improperly placed the case in the Court of Common Pleas, as the legitimate damages—\$3,366.44 at trial (Tr. 12:6) or \$2,030.72 awarded (Final Verdict, p. 5), excluding attorney's fees—fall below the \$7,500 magistrate court limit (S.C. Code Ann. § 22-3-10(1); *Green v. Baughman*, 214

S.C. 101, 51 S.E.2d 366 (1948)). This jurisdictional error prejudiced Appellants by subjecting them to higher court costs and attorney's fees, violating due process. Appellants' denial of rent and damages (Appellant Answer to Complaint, Tr. 67:14 - 76:25) and counterclaim for wrongful withholding of the security deposit under S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(b) (Appellant Answer to Complaint) expose the respondent's inflated claim and jurisdictional error. These misrepresentations undermine the respondent's credibility.

Failed to raise objections

The respondent's claim that Appellant Stephanie Hatton, appearing pro se, 'failed to raise any objections ruled upon during the trial' (Tr. 3 - 78) is false. Appellant Stephanie Hatton Pro se explicitly objected to the plaintiff's introduction of canceled checks and an AC advertisement (Respondent Check Exhibit 2, pg 4), challenging their relevance and authenticity by arguing the checks did not prove payment, the AC did not show a receipt and the AC replacement was unnecessary due to minor wear and tear (Tr. 13:24 - 15:4). The court acknowledged, 'Your objection is noted for the record' (Tr. 15:12-13), and overruled it by admitting Exhibit 2 (Respondent Check Exhibit 2) (Tr. 15:14). Per *State v. Russell*, 345 S.C. 128, 546 S.E.2d 202 (Ct. App. 2001), This objection was timely and specific enough to preserve the issue under SCRE Rule 103(a)(1), which requires a timely objection stating the specific ground, especially for a pro se litigant (*Herron v. Century BMW*, 395 S.C. 461, 465, 719 S.E.2d 640 (2011), the objection was clear in context, and per *Humbert v. State*, 345 S.C. 332,337, 548 S.E.2d 862 (2001), the court's ruling preserved it for appeal. The respondent's failure to address this objection renders their non-preservation claim baseless.

Respondent's Non-Preservation Claims Are Abandoned

Respondent's Brief (pp. 5–6) asserts that Appellants' arguments—challenging the \$495.72 AC/heater award (Argument I), \$1,800 painting/cleaning award (Argument II), \$1,300 rent award and mitigation/double recovery (Argument III), \$3,150 security deposit triple recovery (Argument IV), and unsigned documents—are unpreserved, but provides no specific citations to the trial transcript (Tr. 1:1–78:25) or Final Verdict to support this claim. This failure constitutes abandonment under South Carolina law, requiring the Court to evaluate Appellants' arguments on their merits without considering Respondent's deficient defense. South Carolina appellate courts consistently hold that issues raised in a brief without supporting arguments, citations to authority, or references to the record are abandoned and will not be considered on appeal. In *State v. Dunbar*, the Supreme Court ruled, “An issue raised on appeal but not argued in the brief is deemed abandoned and will not be considered by the appellate court” (356 S.C. 138, 142, 587 S.E.2d 691, 694 (2003)). Similarly, in *First Sav. Bank v. McLean*, the Court held that failure to provide specific arguments or citations waives the issue (314 S.C. 361, 363, 444 S.E.2d 513, 514 (1994)). Respondent's Brief violates these principles by offering only vague assertions of non-preservation, citing *Herron v. Century BMW* (395 S.C. 461, 719 S.E.2d 640 (2011)) and *Elam v. S.C. Dep't of Transp.* (361 S.C. 9, 602 S.E.2d 772 (2004)) without linking them to specific transcript evidence or Appellants' trial actions. Respondent fails to identify any portion of the 78-page trial transcript (Tr. 1:1–78:25) or the Final Verdict to support its claim that Appellants' objections (e.g., Tr. 14:7–15:2, challenging AC replacement), cross-examination (e.g., Tr. 15:23–16:12, mitigation; Tr. 22:20–23:19, painting), testimony (e.g., Tr. 67:23–76:19,

normal wear; Tr. 69:15–23, Pet deposit fee), James Hatton’s testimony (Tr. 46:14–25, early re-rental), or pleadings (Appellant Answer to complaint, the Answer and counterclaim were insufficient to preserve Arguments I–IV and unsigned documents. This omission is fatal, as *Dunbar* requires specific record citations to sustain an argument (356 S.C. at 142). Respondent’s improper Designation request (SCACR Rule 210(b)), seeking to include Appellants’ entire Initial Brief without pinpointing errors, further demonstrates its inability to engage the record, including Appellants’ evidence of mitigation (Tr. 15:23–16:12, 19:15–19), normal wear (Tr. 22:6–9, 74:15–75:6), and jurisdictional misconduct (Tr. 46:14–46:25, \$11,700 claim). Moreover, Respondent’s failure to address Appellants’ statutory arguments under S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410 (mitigation and deposit withholding), § 27-40-510 (normal wear), and § 22-3-10 (jurisdictional limits), or counter Appellants’ statutory authorities and supporting case law abandons any defense to these claims. In *Hunt v. S.C. Forestry Comm’n*, the Court of Appeals held that a party’s failure to brief an issue raised by the appellant constitutes abandonment, entitling the appellant to relief on that issue (358 S.C. 564, 573, 595 S.E.2d 846, 851 (Ct. App. 2004)). Respondent’s silence on Appellants’ evidence (e.g., Tr. 46:14-25, early re-rental; Tr. 49:25–50:2, photos of pre-existing conditions) and statutes concedes their merit. Respondent’s Brief, prepared by an attorney with 30 years of experience, fails to address Appellants’ statutory claims, including jurisdictional inflation—claiming \$11,700 in December 2022 (Tr. 46:14–46:25) despite re-rental by August 2022 (Tr. 11; 2-3), violating § 22-3-10. SCACR Rule 208(b)(1)(E) requires respondent briefs to “contain arguments and citations to authority” addressing the appellant’s claims, and Respondent’s violation risks judicial disapproval for wasting

court resources (*State v. Freiburger*, 366 S.C. 125, 135, 620 S.E.2d 737, 742 (2005) (noting courts' intolerance for procedural gamesmanship)). By abandoning its non-preservation defense, Respondent cannot introduce new transcript arguments (e.g., Tr. 7:19–12:25, Seabrook's testimony) in a sur-reply or oral arguments, as SCACR Rule 208(c) limits such responses to issues raised in the Reply Brief (*Dunbar*, 356 S.C. at 142). Consequently, the Court should deem Respondent's non-preservation claims abandoned and evaluate Appellants' arguments—supported by transcript evidence (Tr. 14:7–15:2, 15:23–25:25, 46:14–46:25, 67:23–76:19), statutes (§ 27-40-410, § 27-40-510, § 22-3-10), and case law (*Staubes v. City of Folly Beach*, 339 S.C. 406, 529 S.E.2d 543 (2000))—on their merits. Appellants' pro se status further warrants leniency in considering preservation (*Herron*, 395 S.C. at 465), ensuring a fair review of the trial court's errors (Verdict p. 4)

Preservation of Arguments in Appellate Brief.

Rent (\$1,300 Award)

1. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as Appellants Vacated by July 3, 2022, Before Any Default, Terminating the Lease [Appellant Brief, p. 10].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants stated the eviction was for late payment but improper due to a February 2022 addendum allowing late payments with fees, and, before July rent was late [Answer, January 19, 2023]. Final Verdict: The court found a July 2022 eviction for non-payment and awarded \$1,300 for July rent, noting the addendum [Final Verdict, pp. 1–2, 5]. Transcript: appellants testified the eviction was wrongful, citing the

addendum (Tr. 20:20–21:2, “they breached and terminated the lease. I didn’t”). Appellants confirmed following court order leaving at 5:pm (Tr. 69:4–20). Respondent Seabrook testified Appellants vacated by the “third day” of the writ (Tr. 7:1–7). James Hatton corroborated the July 3 move-out (Tr. 35:9–11).

- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 20:20–21:2, 35:9–11, 69:4–20) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer to Complaint and at trial (January 27, 2025) [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 20:20–21:2, 35:9–11].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified addendum and July 3 vacation (Tr. 20:20–21:2, 35:9–11, 69:4–20).
 - Conclusion: Preserved [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 7:1–7, 20:20–21:2, 35:9–11, 69:4–20; Final Verdict, pp. 1–2, 5].
2. **Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as the June 2022 Eviction Was Not for Non-Payment, Rendering July Non-Payment Impossible [Appellant Brief, p. 12].**
- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants claimed the eviction was for late payment, not non-payment, as June rent was paid, and the addendum allowed late payments [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
 - Final Verdict: The court found a July 2022 eviction for non-payment, despite noting paid June rent (Tr. 7:11–14) [Final Verdict, p. 2].

- Transcript: Appellants testified June rent was paid, and eviction occurred before July rent was due (Tr. 76:20, “There is no rent to be paid”). Seabrook confirmed June rent payment (Tr. 7:11–14) and vacation by July 3 (Tr. 6:18–25). James Hatton supported a June eviction (Tr. 35:9–11).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 6:18–25, 76:20, 35:9–11) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Appellant Answer to Complaint and Counterclaim and at trial [Appellant Answer to Complaint, Tr. 6:18–25, 35:9–11, 76:20].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified paid June rent and June eviction (Tr. 7:11–14, 35:9–11, 76:20).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 6:18–25, 7:11–14, 35:9–11, 75:18–20; Final Verdict, p. 2].

3. Title: Even if the Lease Was Not Terminated in June, the \$1,300 Award Is Erroneous, as Re-Rental Proceeds Fully Mitigated All Rent Losses After Eviction, and the Award Results in Impermissible Double Recovery [Appellant Brief, p. 13].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants claimed all rent was paid, and re-rental mitigated losses [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$1,300 for July rent but noted re-rental in August 2022 mitigated further losses [Final Verdict, p. 2].

- Transcript: Appellants questioned re-rental at \$1,500/month (Tr. 15:23–16:10). James Hatton testified to furniture and people on July 7, suggesting early re-rental (Tr. 46:3–23). Seabrook confirmed re-rental at \$1,500/month (Tr. 19:15–20:2).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 15:23–16:10)
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Appellant Answer to Complaint and at trial [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 15:23–16:10].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified re-rental proceeds (Tr. 19:15–20:2) and mitigation (Tr. 46:6–23).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Appellant answer to Complaint; Tr. 15:23–16:10, 46:6–23; Final Verdict, p. 2.]

4. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding \$1,300 for July 2022 Rent, as the Landlord’s Discretionary Termination in June 2022 Absolved Appellants of Future Rent Obligations, and Double Recovery Bars Recovery [Appellant Brief, p. 16].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants argued the eviction was wrongful, and the landlord’s termination ended rent obligations [Appellant Answer to Complain].
- Final Verdict: The court found a July eviction and awarded \$1,300, despite evidence of a June eviction (Tr. 7:1–5) [Final Verdict, p. 2].
- Transcript: Appellants testified the eviction was premature alleging landlord initiated termination (Tr. 20:20–21:2). Seabrook confirmed

vacation by July 3 (Tr. 7:1–7). James Hatton noted July 7 activity, suggesting early mitigation (Tr. 46:6–25).

- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 20:20–21:2, 7:1–7) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Appellant Answer to Complaint, Tr. 20:20–21:2].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified discretionary termination and June eviction (Tr. 20:20–21:2, 7:1–7).
 - Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 7:1–7, 20:20–21:2, 46:6–23; Final Verdict, p. 2;].
 - **II. AC/Heater Unit (\$495.72 Award)**

5. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Relying on Inconsistent and Unreliable Testimony [Appellant Brief, p. 20].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and alleged Plaintiff's damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented, thereby challenging the basis for liability and the reliability of testimony supporting the alleged damage [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$495.72 for one AC unit, finding buttons non-functional based on Seabrook's testimony [Final Verdict, pp. 2, 5].
- Transcript: Appellants challenged Seabrook's claim of broken buttons, noting she admitted the unit was functional (Tr. 24:23–25:19). Appellant testified the unit worked with only cosmetic wear (Tr. 14:11–14).

- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 14:11–14, 24:23–25:19) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 14:11–14].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified inconsistent testimony and functionality (Tr. 24:23–25:19).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 14:11–14, 24:23–25:19; Final Verdict, pp. 2, 5].

6. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Relying on Testimony Over Photographic Evidence [Appellant Brief, p. 21].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and asserted Plaintiff's damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented [Appellant Answer to Complaint]. This denial relates to the nature of the AC unit damage.
- Final Verdict: The court relied on Seabrook's testimony over photos showing minor wear [Final Verdict, p. 2].
- Transcript: Appellants presented photos showing cosmetic wear (Tr. 24:17–25; Respondent Check Exhibit 2, p. 10). Seabrook admitted only one button was affected (Tr. 25:12–19).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via photos and testimony (Tr. 24:17–25, 49:25-50:2) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).

- Timely Manner: Raised in Appellant Answer to Complaint and at trial [Answer; Tr. 24:17–25, 49:25-50:2].
- Sufficient Specificity: Specified photographic evidence of minor wear (Tr. 24:17–25, 49:25-50:2).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Appellant Answer to complaint; Tr. 24:17–25; 49:25-50:2Final Verdict, p. 2].

7. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Finding Non-Adjustable Temperature [Appellant Brief, p. 21].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and alleged Plaintiff's damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court found the unit's temperature could not be adjusted, relying on Seabrook [Final Verdict, p. 2].
- Transcript: Appellant Stephanie Hatton and Seabrook agreed the unit was functional (Tr. 14:13–14, 22:7). Seabrook admitted only one button was affected, not temperature control (Tr. 25:12–19).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 14:13–14, 25:12–19) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 14:13–14].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified unit functionality (Tr. 14:13–14, 25:12–19).

- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 14:13–14, 25:12–19; Final Verdict, p. 2].

8. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Holding Appellant Liable for Essential Units [Appellant Brief, p. 22].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and alleged that Plaintiff had charged for damages that plaintiff's representatives caused. Appellants argued Respondent's failure to repair the central HVAC system made AC units the essential units, absolving liability [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$495.72 without addressing HVAC neglect [Final Verdict, p. 5].
- Transcript: Appellant testified the central HVAC was non-functional, and Respondent refused repairs (Tr. 75:1–6). Appellant noted pre-existing wear on units (Tr. 68:17–20).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 75:1–6, 68:17–20) and implicitly ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 5).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Appellants Answer to Complaint Tr. 75:1–6].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified HVAC neglect and essential units (Tr. 75:1–6).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 68:17–20, 75:1–6; Final Verdict, p. 5].

9. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Awarding Unsubstantiated Damages

[Appellant Brief, p. 23].

- Answer and Counterclaim: appellants disputed damages lacking proof, like AC replacement costs ““Defendants also deny any damages at time as plaintiff has exaggerated claims, misrepresented damage... had asked for a list of repairs prior-to leaving, Plaintiff failed to supply Defendant with that list [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$495.72 based on an advertisement, not a receipt [Respondent Check Exhibit 2, pg 4, Final Verdict, p. 5].
- Transcript: Appellant Hatton questioned the lack of a receipt (Tr. 14:11–12). Seabrook admitted the cost was an estimate (Tr. 13:22–24).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 14:11–12) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 5).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 14:11–12].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified lack of receipt (Tr. 14:11–12) [Appellant Brief, p. 23].
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 13:22–24, 14:11–12; Final Verdict, p. 5].

III. Painting and Cleaning (\$1,800 Award)

10. Title: The Apartment’s Condition Pre-Existed the Appellant’s Tenancy and Showed Signs of Normal Wear and Tear [Appellant Brief, p. 31].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and alleged that Plaintiff's damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented, and that damages were "caused by Plaintiffs representatives or other" [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$1,500 for painting and \$300 for cleaning, attributing damage to Appellants [Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5].
- Transcript: Appellant testified to pre-existing dirt and dog hair (Tr. 68:13–19) and mold due to HVAC issues (Tr. 74:17–75:6). James Hatton attributed warped walls to humidity, not tenant damage (Tr. 36:17–39:7; Appellant Exhibit 4, pp. 3–5).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 68:13–19, 74:17–75:6) and ruled on (Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 68:13–19].
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 36:17–39:7, 68:13–19, 74:17–75:6; Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5;].

11. Title: Three Witnesses Negate Respondent's Uncorroborated Odor Claim [Appellant Brief, p. 33].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants generally denied owing damages and asserted Plaintiff's damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented [Appellants Answer to Complaint].

- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$1,500 for painting to address “harsh cat pee odor” [Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5].
- Transcript: James Hatton testified no urine smell was present (Tr. 39:11–18). Joan Brown said the apartment was in good condition (Tr. 61:9–11). Appellant testified to thorough cleaning with bleach (Tr. 69:4–12).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 39:11–18, 61:9–11, 69:4–12) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 3).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 69:4–12].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified three witnesses’ testimony on clean condition (Tr. 39:11–18, 61:9–11, 69:4–12).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 39:11–18, 61:9–11, 69:4–12; Final Verdict, p. 3].

12. Title: Non-Itemized and Undisclosed Awards Lack Credible Evidence and Prejudiced the Appellants [Appellant Brief, p. 35].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants claimed Respondent failed to provide a requested list of repairs prior to leaving and that Plaintiff had “doubled billed in its invoice and demanded Defendants to pay [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court relied on a non-itemized invoice for painting and cleaning awards [Final Verdict, p. 2].

- Transcript: Appellant Stephanie Hatton Pro se questioned non-itemized cleaning charges (Tr. 23:14–24:17). Seabrook confirmed sending a post-move-out list (Tr. 32:5–32:21). Appellant noted non-disclosure of receipts prejudiced its defense (Tr. 15:12-14, 23:13-19).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 23:14–24:17, 15:14, 23:13-19) and ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 2).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 23:14–24:17].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified non-itemized invoices and prejudice (Tr. 23:14–24:17, 15:14).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Appellant Answer to Complaint; Tr. 15:14, 23:14–24:17, 32:5–32:21; Final Verdict, p. 2;].

13. Title: Landlord’s Failure to Maintain HVAC System Negates Tenant Liability for Painting Award [Appellant Brief, p. 37].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants denied owing damages and alleged that Plaintiff’s damage claims were exaggerated and misrepresented, and "charged for damages that plaintiffs representatives caused" [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court awarded \$1,500 for painting, ignoring HVAC neglect [Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5].

- Transcript: Appellant testified Respondent refused HVAC repairs, causing humidity and mold (Tr. 74:17–75:6). James Hatton attributed warped walls to HVAC issues (Tr. 36:17–39:7).
- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 74:17–75:6, 36:17–39:7) and implicitly ruled on (Final Verdict, p. 3).
 - Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 74:17–75:6].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified HVAC neglect causing mold (Tr. 74:17–75:6).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 36:17–39:7, 74:17–75:6; Final Verdict, pp. 3, 5;].

IV. Counterclaim for Restitution

14. Title: The Circuit Court Erred in Failing to Award Triple the Security Deposit Under S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(b) for Respondent’s Failure to Provide Itemized Notice Within Thirty Days [Appellant Brief, p. 39].

- Answer and Counterclaim: Appellants sought triple the security deposit for non-itemized notice and exaggerated claims [Appellant Answer to Complaint].
- Final Verdict: The court deducted the \$1,050 security and \$900 pet deposit but didn’t rule on the counterclaim [Final Verdict, p. 3].
- Transcript: Appellant challenged non-itemized invoices (Tr. 23:14–24:17) and exaggerated claims (e.g., AC units, Tr. 21:8–22:6; painting, Tr. 74:17–

75:1). Appellant noted the pet deposit omission (Tr. 69:20–22). Joan Brown supported retaliatory eviction (Tr. 58:7–59:20).

- Preservation:
 - Raised to and Ruled Upon: Raised via testimony (Tr. 21:8–75:1, 69:20–22) and partially considered via reduced damages (Final Verdict, pp. 2–3).
 - Raised by Appellant: Timely Manner: Raised in Answer and at trial [Answer; Tr. 21:8–75:1].
 - Sufficient Specificity: Specified non-itemized notice and harassment (Tr. 23:14–24:17, 73:6–14).
- Conclusion: Preserved [Answer; Tr. 21:8–75:1, 69:20–22; Final Verdict, pp. 2–3]

No Rule 59(e) Motion Was Required for Issues Ruled Upon

Respondent's claim that Appellants failed to preserve issues by not filing a Rule 59(e), SCRPC motion is meritless. A Rule 59(e) motion is only required for issues raised but not ruled upon by the trial court. *Elam v. S.C. Dep't of Transp.*, 361 S.C. 9, 24, 602 S.E.2d 772, 780 (2004). The Final Verdict (pp. 1–5) explicitly ruled on Issues 1–13 (rent, AC, painting/cleaning awards) and implicitly denied Issue 14 (counterclaim) by deducting deposits without awarding triple damages. Appellants pro se status warrants leniency in preservation, per *Herron v. Century BMW*, 395 S.C. 461, 465, 719 S.E.2d 640 (2011). Thus, all issues were preserved without a Rule 59(e) motion

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Appellants respectfully request that this Court find the respondent's Statement of Facts misleading and unsupported by the record. The respondent's inflated \$11,700 rent claim misrepresented the lawful amount, resulting in an improper filing in the Court of Common Pleas, violating S.C. Code Ann. § 22-3-10 and prejudicing Appellants through higher court costs and fees. Appellants' objections and arguments, were properly preserved as detailed in this reply, and the respondent's non-preservation claims are abandoned due to lack of specific citations (State v. Dunbar, 356 S.C. 138, 142, 587 S.E.2d 691 (2003)). Accordingly, Appellants request that this Court reverse the trial court's awards for rent (\$1,300), AC/heater (\$495.72), and painting/cleaning (\$1,800), grant their counterclaim for triple the security deposit under S.C. Code Ann. § 27-40-410(b), and remand the case to the magistrate court for proper adjudication, ensuring due process and fairness.

Respectfully submitted, August 25, 2025

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Proof Of Service For Appellants' Reply to Respondents reply to
Appellants' Initial Brief
THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

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Aug 25 2025

SC Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM HORRY COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas

David Caraker , Circuit Court Judge

Case No. 2025-000445

Sam Investment Properties, LLC, n/k/a
Archangel Investments, LLC

Respondent,

v.

Stephanie Hatton and Brandon Deubell,

Appellants

PROOF OF SERVICE

We do certify that we have served the Appellants' reply to Respondent's reply to Appellants' Initial Brief on Sam Investment Properties, LLC n/k/a Archangel Investments, LLC by depositing a copy of it in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, on August 25, 2025, addressed to Respondent's attorney of record, Jay G Anderson, Post Office Box 969, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina 29576

August 25, 2025

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THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM HORRY COUNTY

Court of Common Pleas
David P. Caraker, Circuit Court Judge

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Stephanie Hatton and Brandon Deubell, Appellants.

Appellate Case No. 2025-000445

Appellants' Reply to Respondents reply to Appellants' Initial Brief

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August 25, 2025

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