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SC Court of Appeals

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

APPEAL FROM BERKELEY COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas
The Honorable Maite Murphy, Circuit Court Judge

Appellate Case No. 2026-000958

JOSETTA SINGLETON, JAYLA SINGLETON,
AND TINARRIS WILLIAMS,
Appellants,

AH4R MANAGEMENT-SC, LLC,
as agent for AMH DEVELOPMENT, LLC,
Respondent.

REPLY BRIEF OF APPELLANTS

INTRODUCTION

Respondent's Initial Brief presents this appeal as though Appellants are attempting to obtain review of an unrelated second appeal concerning only a bond order. That characterization does not accurately reflect the procedural history of this case.

This appeal was properly initiated from the Circuit Court's order affirming the Magistrate Court's ejectment ruling. During the pendency of that appeal, this Court issued an order remanding the matter to the Circuit Court for an expedited hearing concerning Appellants' requested stay and determination of an appeal bond. The Circuit Court subsequently entered its June 4, 2026 Appeal Bond Order.

Appellants sought review of that Bond Order pursuant to Rule 241(d)(2), SCACR, within the existing appellate proceeding. Appellants expressly advised this Court that they were not attempting to create an unauthorized second direct appeal.

Most importantly, Respondent's procedural arguments were presented to this Court in Respondent's Motion to Dismiss. On August 21, 2026, this Court denied that Motion and accepted Appellants' prior submission as the Initial Brief. Respondent now repeats substantially the same dismissal arguments in its Initial Respondent's Brief.

Appellants respectfully submit that the Court should reject Respondent's attempt to transform procedural disputes that have already been presented to and addressed by this Court into a basis for affirming the eviction without consideration of the issues properly before the Court.

Respondent's brief also contains material inaccuracies concerning the amount of the appeal bond and the timing and procedural circumstances surrounding the written Bond Order. The actual

June 4, 2026 order states that the appeal bond was $3,977.25, while Respondent repeatedly represents the amount as $3,997.25.

For these reasons, Appellants respectfully request that the Court reject Respondent's arguments for dismissal and mootness, consider the issues properly presented, and grant the relief requested by Appellants.

ARGUMENT

I. RESPONDENT'S ABANDONMENT ARGUMENT SHOULD NOT BE USED TO DISMISS AN APPEAL THAT THIS COURT HAS ALREADY ALLOWED TO PROCEED.

Respondent's principal argument is that Appellants abandoned any challenge to the underlying ejectment orders because the June 26, 2026 Initial Brief focused primarily upon the Bond Order.

Respondent's argument ignores the procedural posture of the case after Respondent filed its Motion to Dismiss.

Respondent previously asked this Court to dismiss the appeal on substantially the same grounds. The Court did not grant that request. Instead, on August 21, 2026, this Court denied Respondent's Motion to Dismiss and accepted Appellants' prior submission as an Initial Brief.

The significance of that ruling is not that Appellants have automatically prevailed on the merits. Rather, the significance is that Respondent cannot now treat its previously rejected dismissal request as though the Court had already ordered dismissal.

Appellants respectfully recognize that issues must be properly presented and supported under Rule 208, SCACR. Appellants therefore address Respondent's arguments directly in this Reply rather than ignoring them.

Respondent's characterization of the appeal should not substitute for the Court's own determination of what issues are properly before it based upon the Notices of Appeal, the Court's orders, the record, and the appellate filings.

II. THE BOND ORDER WAS SUBJECT TO REVIEW UNDER RULE 241(d)(2) WITHIN THE EXISTING APPEAL; RESPONDENT'S "SECOND NOTICE OF APPEAL" ARGUMENT MISCHARACTERIZES APPELLANTS' PROCEDURAL POSITION.

Respondent repeatedly argues that Appellants failed to file a second notice of appeal from the June 4 Bond Order.

That argument assumes that Appellants were attempting to commence an ordinary second direct appeal.

They were not.

Rule 241(d)(2), SCACR expressly provides that after the lower court has ruled concerning a stay or supersedeas, a party may petition the appellate court where the appeal is pending for review of that order.

Appellants' Rule 241 petition expressly stated that the request for review of the June 4 Bond Order was being made within Appellate Case No. 2026-000958 and was not intended to commence an unauthorized separate direct appeal.

Respondent's own earlier Motion to Dismiss recognized that Rule 241(d)(2) is the mechanism by which an aggrieved party may seek appellate review of a stay or bond order in the pending appeal.

Accordingly, Respondent should not be permitted to characterize Appellants' Rule 241 request as though Appellants were attempting to evade the appellate rules by filing an unauthorized second direct appeal.

The procedural history is particularly significant because the Circuit Court itself recognized that Appellants had submitted the Bond Order to the Court of Appeals and stayed the compliance proceeding pursuant to Rule 241 pending the appellate outcome.

The record therefore demonstrates that the Bond Order was not treated by the lower court as an entirely unrelated proceeding. It arose directly from the stay granted in connection with this appeal and was expressly placed before the appellate court for review.

III. RESPONDENT'S DESCRIPTION OF THE APPEAL BOND IS FACTUALLY INCORRECT AND DEMONSTRATES WHY THE COURT SHOULD REVIEW THE ACTUAL ORDER AND RECORD.

Respondent repeatedly states that the Circuit Court ordered an appeal bond of $3,997.25.

The actual June 4, 2026 Bond Order states that the appeal bond was:

$3,977.25.

The difference is $20.00.

This discrepancy is significant because Respondent simultaneously argues that Appellants' challenge to the bond calculation is too vague and that the underlying financial figures are undisputed.

The Court should therefore rely upon the actual order and record rather than Respondent's characterization of the amount.

Appellants respectfully submit that this discrepancy reinforces the need for appellate review of the actual bond calculation and the underlying account information upon which the bond was based.

IV. THE JUNE 1 DEADLINE MUST BE CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE WRITTEN BOND ORDER WAS NOT ENTERED UNTIL JUNE 4.

Respondent acknowledges that Judge Doby announced his ruling at the May 26 hearing but that the written Bond Order was not formally filed until June 4, 2026.

The actual court filing reflects an electronic filing date of June 4, 2026.

The Bond Order nevertheless states that the $3,977.25 bond was due June 1.

Appellants do not dispute that the Court announced a ruling at the May 26 hearing. The issue is whether Appellants' alleged noncompliance should automatically result in dissolution of the stay when the written order containing the operative terms was not entered until June 4 and Appellants promptly attempted to tender the required payment after learning of the written order.

Appellants' Rule 241 petition states that Appellants did not receive the written order before the June 1 deadline and attempted to tender payment on June 5 after learning of the order.

The Circuit Court subsequently stayed the compliance proceeding pursuant to Rule 241 pending the outcome of the appellate proceedings.

Thus, Respondent's statement that Appellants simply "failed to pay" omits the very circumstances that gave rise to the dispute concerning compliance.

The question before the Court is not merely whether June 1 appears on the face of the order. The Court must consider the circumstances surrounding the order, the timing of its entry, Appellants' attempted tender, the subsequent compliance proceedings, and the appellate stay.

V. RESPONDENT'S CLAIM THAT THE BOND ISSUE IS MOOT DEPENDS UPON THE VERY RESULT RESPONDENT IS ASKING THE COURT TO REACH.

Respondent argues that the bond issue is moot because the underlying ejectment appeal should be dismissed or affirmed.

That argument is circular.

The purpose of the stay and bond proceeding was to preserve the status quo while the appeal was pending. Rule 241 specifically provides procedures governing stays and supersedeas during an appeal and authorizes appellate review of the lower court's ruling.

The Bond Order therefore cannot be declared irrelevant merely by assuming that the underlying appeal must necessarily fail.

The Court should first determine the issues properly before it. If the Court reaches the merits of the Bond Order, Appellants are entitled to have the Court consider whether the Circuit Court properly calculated the bond and whether the conditions imposed were supported by the record.

VI. THE RECORD CONTAINS EVIDENCE OF DISPUTED PAYMENT HISTORY AND ACCOUNT CHARGES, CONTRARY TO RESPONDENT'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE FINANCIAL HISTORY AS ENTIRELY "UNDISPUTED."

Respondent repeatedly characterizes Appellants' failure to make timely payment as an undisputed fact.

The record, however, contains Appellants' testimony concerning payment history, money orders, account charges, duplicate charges, and Respondent's ledger.

At the March 3, 2026 hearing, Appellant Josetta Singleton specifically testified concerning payments made, the appeal bond previously paid, additional charges added to the account, duplicate charges, and Respondent's accounting.

Accordingly, the Court should not accept Respondent's characterization that the financial circumstances were simply undisputed.

Appellants recognize that the appellate court reviews the record rather than receiving new evidence. Appellants therefore request that the Court consider the actual payment records, ledger, receipts, money orders, and transcript contained in the Record on Appeal.

The existence of a written lease does not eliminate the need for the Court to examine whether the factual findings and financial calculations relied upon below are actually supported by the record.

VII. RESPONDENT'S RELIANCE ON THE "LAW OF THE CASE" DOCTRINE IS OVERBROAD.

Respondent relies upon the general proposition that an unappealed ruling may become the law of the case.

Appellants do not dispute that general principle.

The question is whether the particular issues Respondent seeks to remove from appellate review were properly presented and whether the Court's August 21, 2026 order permits this appeal to proceed.

The law-of-the-case doctrine cannot be used as a substitute for determining the actual scope of the appeal after this Court denied Respondent's Motion to Dismiss.

Furthermore, Respondent's argument conflates the underlying ejectment order with the subsequent Bond Order entered after this Court remanded the matter for an expedited stay and bond determination.

Those are distinct rulings arising at different stages of the proceedings.

Appellants respectfully request that the Court address the actual issues before it rather than treating the entire appeal as abandoned based solely upon Respondent's characterization of Appellants' June filing.

VIII. RESPONDENT'S RELIANCE ON PROCEDURAL TECHNICALITIES SHOULD NOT OVERRIDE THE COURT'S OWN AUGUST 21 ORDER AND THE PROCEDURAL HISTORY OF THIS APPEAL.

Respondent's brief repeatedly asks the Court to treat Appellants' filings as though they never occurred or as though the Court had already dismissed the appeal.

That is inconsistent with the current procedural posture.

This Court denied Respondent's Motion to Dismiss on August 21, 2026 and accepted Appellants' previous submission as an Initial Brief.

The Court therefore has an existing appeal before it.

Appellants respectfully request that the Court decide the issues within the scope of that appeal based upon the record and applicable law rather than dismissing the matter through a procedural characterization that the Court previously declined to adopt as a basis for dismissal.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Appellants respectfully request that this Court:

1. Reject Respondent's request to dismiss or affirm the appeal based upon alleged abandonment;
2. Reject Respondent's contention that the Bond Order is automatically moot;
3. Recognize that Appellants sought review of the June 4, 2026 Bond Order pursuant to Rule 241(d)(2), SCACR within the existing appellate proceeding;
4. Consider the actual June 4, 2026 Bond Order, including its stated bond amount of $3,977.25;
5. Consider the circumstances surrounding the June 1 deadline and the June 4 entry of the written Bond Order;
6. Consider the payment records, ledger evidence, receipts, money orders, transcript, and other materials properly included in the Record on Appeal;
7. Reject Respondent's characterization of the payment and account history as wholly undisputed where the record contains evidence disputing the account and charges;
8. Grant such relief as is appropriate concerning the June 4, 2026 Bond Order and the continuation of the stay; and
9. Grant such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

Josetta Singleton

Josetta Singleton

Jayla Singleton

Jayla Singleton

Tinarris Williams

Tinarris Williams

Appellants, Pro Se

Date: 9/4/2026