

FORM 4

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
 COUNTY OF DORCHESTER
 IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

JUDGMENT IN A CIVIL CASE
 CASE NUMBER 2013CP1800183

Molly M Morphey

2014 NOV -6 PM 12:58

Thomas Ferro
 Stephen Dudek

RECEIVED

DEC 15 2014

CLERK OF COURT
 DORCHESTER COUNTY

PLAINTIFF(S)

SC COURT of Appeals

Submitted by:

Attorney for: Plaintiff Defendant
 Self-Represented Litigant

DISPOSITION TYPE (CHECK ONE)

- JURY VERDICT.** This action came before the court for a trial by jury. The issues have been tried and a verdict rendered.
- DECISION BY THE COURT.** This action came to trial or hearing before the court. The issues have been tried or heard and a decision rendered. See Page 2 for additional information.
- ACTION DISMISSED (CHECK REASON):** Rule 12(b), SCRPC; Rule 41(a), SCRPC (Vol. Nonsuit);
 Rule 43(k), SCRPC (Settled); Other: _____
- ACTION STRICKEN (CHECK REASON):** Rule 40(j) SCRPC; Bankruptcy;
 Binding arbitration, subject to right to restore to confirm, vacate or modify arbitration award; Other: _____
- DISPOSITION OF APPEAL TO THE CIRCUIT COURT (CHECK APPLICABLE BOX):**
 Affirmed; Reversed; Remanded; Other:

NOTE: ATTORNEYS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR NOTIFYING LOWER COURT, TRIBUNAL, OR ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY OF THE CIRCUIT COURT RULING IN THIS APPEAL.

IT IS ORDERED AND ADJUDGED: See attached order; (formal order to follow) Statement of Judgment by the Court:

ORDER INFORMATION

This order ends does not end the case.
 Additional Information for the Clerk: _____

INFORMATION FOR THE JUDGMENT INDEX

Complete this section below when the judgment affects title to real or personal property or if any amount should be enrolled. If there is no judgment information, indicate "N/A" in one of the boxes below.

Judgment in Favor of (List name(s) below)	Judgment Against (List name(s) below)	Judgment Amount To be Enrolled (List amount(s) below)

If applicable, describe the property, including tax map information and address, referenced in the order:

The judgment information above has been provided by the submitting party. Disputes concerning the amounts contained in this form may be addressed by way of motion pursuant to the SC Rules of Civil Procedure. Amounts to be computed such as interest or additional taxable costs not available at the time the form and final order are submitted to the judge may be provided to the clerk. Note: Title abstractors and researchers should refer to the official court order for judgment details.

Master in Equity

James L. Williams

3078
 Judge Code

11/6/2014
 Date

For Clerk of Court Office Use Only

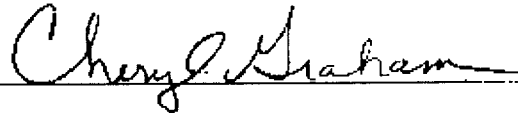
This judgment was entered on **November 6, 2014**, and a copy mailed first class or placed in the appropriate attorney's box on **November 6, 2014**, to attorneys of record or to parties (when appearing pro se) as follows:

John A. Massalon PO Box 859 Charleston, SC 29402

David A. Collins PO Box 40578 Charleston, SC 29423
Thomas Ferro 788 East Butternut Road Summerville, SC 29483
Lorraine Ferro 788 East Butternut Road Summerville, SC 29483

ATTORNEY(S) FOR THE PLAINTIFF(S)

ATTORNEY(S) FOR THE DEFENDANT(S)



Court Reporter

Cheryl Graham - Clerk of Court

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING DECISION BY THE COURT AS REFERENCED ON PAGE 1.

This action came to trial or hearing before the court. The issues have been tried or heard and a decision rendered.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF DORCHESTER

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
FIRST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
EQUITY DIVISION

Civil Action No.: 2013CP1800074
consolidated with Civil Action No.
2013CP1800183

Stephen Dudek, Doreen Cross,
Plaintiffs

Versus

Thomas M Ferro, and Lorraine B Ferro,
Defendants

AND

Molly M Morphew,
Plaintiff

Versus

Stephen Dudek, Doreen Cross, Thomas
Ferro and Lorraine Ferro,
Defendants

ORDER

2014 NOV -5 PM 12:51
COURT REPORTER
DORCHESTER COUNTY

Presiding Judge: James E. Chellis
Master in Equity

June 11, 2014 and Thursday, June 12, 2014

Appearances:

For Plaintiff Morphew:
Wills Massalon & Allen, LLC
John A. Massalon, Esquire
97 Broad Street
P. O. Box 859
Charleston, South Carolina 29402

For Defendants :Dudek & Cross
Law Firm of David A. Collins, LLC
David A. Collins, Esquire
P. O. Box 40578
Charleston, South Carolina 29423

Defendants:
Thomas M Ferro and Lorraine B Ferro,
Defendants,
Pro Se

Emily R. Mirek, Court Reporter and Notary Public

Civil Action No.: 2013CP1800074 consolidated with Civil Action No. 2013CP1800183

ORDER
Morphew, Dudek, Cross, Ferro

PREFACE

This is a breach of contract action. Plaintiff Morphew seeks enforcement of a contract for the purchase of real estate she entered into with Defendants Ferro on December 16, 2012 (the Morphew Contract). Defendants Dudek and Cross seek enforcement of a contract for the purchase of real estate they entered into with Defendants Ferro on October 23, 2012 (the Dudek/Cross Contract). The real property described in each contract is the same. It consists of a residential property on 6.006 acres near Summerville (the Real Property) Plaintiff's Exhibit 23, cf. endnote 10). All parties agree the residential real property is unique. All Parties agree both contracts are unambiguous.

Plaintiff Morphew and Defendants Ferro assert the latter contract, the first contract, is not enforceable. Plaintiff Morphew and Defendants Ferro assert Defendants Dudek and Cross failed to meet conditions of their contract in a timely manner. Plaintiff Morphew alternatively seeks damages against Defendants Ferro on breach of the Morphew Contract should the Court direct the specific performance of Dudek/Cross Contract. Hence, Defendants Ferro champion the Morphew Contract. As such, Plaintiff Morphew and Defendants Ferro have consistent positions on the Dudek/Cross Contract. The latter consistent positions diverge on the issue of Defendants Ferro's breach of the Morphew Contract.

This Court finds Plaintiff Morphew and Defendants Ferro consistent position untenable. The Dudek/Cross Contract is enforceable. This Court will order specific performance of that contract. The Morphew Contract is contingent on termination of the Dudek/Cross Contract. Hence, this Court will declare that contract enforceable only if Defendants Dudek and Cross fail to complete the performance of the Dudek/Cross Contract as ordered by this Court. Since the Dudek/Cross Contract is enforceable subject to conditions, this Court will fashion the remedy of specific performance giving due regard to the conditions, the time for completion of which will need to be reset, since the conditions are reasonably designed to protect all parties to the Contract. Plaintiff Morphew has a conditional contract that is not enforceable unless Defendants Dudek and Cross elect to terminate the contract as directed to be specifically performed. The Court's analysis follows.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS OF LAW & EQUITY

This Court is guided by many principals of law and equity. These guides include the following:

1. It is not the province of the courts to construe contracts broader than the parties have elected to make them or to award benefits where none was [sic] intended. Stewart v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 341 S.C. 143, 151, 533 S.E.2d 597, 601 (2000).
2. The judicial function of a court of law is to enforce a contract as made by the parties, and not to rewrite or to distort, under the guise of judicial construction, contracts, the terms of which are plain and unambiguous. Hardee v. Hardee, 355 S.C. 382, 387, 585 S.E.2d 501, 503 (2003).
3. The law by which a contract is to be governed, is resolved into the terms whereby it is entered into; provided that the contract be consistent with morality and not repugnant to law or the principles of public policy. Satterwhite's Adm'rs v. McKie, 16 S.C.L. 397, 398 (S.C. Const. App. 1824).
4. Where a contract's language is plain and unambiguous, the language used by the parties "determines the instrument's force and effect." Jordan v. Sec. Group, Inc., 311 S.C. 227, 230, 428 S.E.2d 705, 707 (1993).
5. A court reviewing a written contract must discern:
[T]he intention of the parties and the meaning[, which] are gathered primarily from the contents of the writing itself, or, as otherwise stated, from the four corners of the instrument, and when such contract is clear and unequivocal, its meaning must be determined by its contents alone; and a meaning cannot be given it other than that expressed. Hence words cannot be read into a contract which import an intent wholly unexpressed when the contract was executed. McPherson v. J.E. Serrine & Co., 206 S.C. 183, 204, 33 S.E.2d 501, 509 (1945); see also ERIE Ins. Co. v. Winter Constr. Co., 393 S.C. 455, 460, 713 S.E.2d 318, 321 (Ct.App.2011) ("It is not the function of the court to rewrite contracts for parties."). "Where an agreement is clear and capable of legal interpretation, the court's only function is to interpret its lawful meaning, discover the intention of the parties as found within the agreement, and give effect to it." Heins v. Heins, 344 S.C. 146, 158, 543 S.E.2d 224, 230 (Ct.App.2001). Park Regency, LLC v. R & D Dev. of the Carolinas, LLC, 402 S.C. 401, 412-13, 741 S.E.2d 528, 534 (Ct. App. 2012).
6. If a promisor prevents or hinders the occurrence of a condition, or the performance of a return promise, and the condition would have occurred or the performance of the return promise been rendered except for such prevention or hindrance, the condition is excused, and the actual or threatened nonperformance of the return promise does not discharge the promisor's duty, unless (a) the prevention or hindrance by the promisor is caused or justified by the conduct or pecuniary circumstances of the other party; or (b) the terms of

the contract are such that the risk of such prevention or hindrance as occurs is assumed by the other party. Restatement (First) of Contracts § 295 (1932)

7. Impracticability excuses the non-occurrence of a condition if the occurrence of the condition is not a material part of the agreed exchange and forfeiture would otherwise result. Restatement (Second) of Contracts § 271 (1981).
8. Waiver is the voluntary and intentional relinquishment of a known right. *Janasik*, 307 S.C. at 344, 415 S.E.2d at 387. It may be implied from circumstances indicating an intent to waive. *Bonnette v. State*, 277 S.C. 17, 282 S.E.2d 597 (1981); *Lyles v. BMI, Inc.*, 292 S.C. 153, 355 S.E.2d 282 (Ct.App.1987). Acts that are inconsistent with the continued assertion of a right may also give rise to a waiver. *Bonnette*, 282 S.E.2d 597. *Provident Life & Acc. Ins. Co. v. Driver*, 317 S.C. 471, 478, 451 S.E.2d 924, 928-29 (Ct. App. 1994).
9. In the construction of a contract, the intention of the parties to be collected from the instrument, (if in writing,) should be constantly in view, and in their performance, good faith and fair dealing is always required. And from hence, [the Court] deduce[s] the rule that when a contract stipulates for the performance of a condition on the event of a contingency, the occurrence of which must be known to one of the parties, but not necessarily known to the other, it is the duty of him to whom it is known to give notice of it to the other. . . *Birdseye v. Davis*, 13 S.C.L. 296, 298, 297-98 (S.C. Const. App. 1822).
10. Every contract imposes upon each party a duty of good faith and fair dealing in its performance and its enforcement. *Restatement (Second) of Contracts § 205 (1981)*.
11. The discretion to grant or refuse specific performance is a judicial discretion to be exercised in accordance with special rules of equity and with regard to the facts and circumstances of each case." *Guignard v. Atkins*, 282 S.C. 61, 64, 317 S.E.2d 137, 140 (Ct.App.1984); accord *Bishop v. Tolbert*, 249 S.C. 289, 298, 153 S.E.2d 912, 917 (1967) ("The rule is well settled that the granting of specific performance is not a matter of absolute right, but rests in the sound or judicial discretion of the Court, guided by established principles, and exercised on a consideration of all the circumstances of each particular case."). "Specific performance will not be ordered unless the contract expresses the true intent of the parties and is fair, just and equitable." *Amick v. Hagler*, 286 S.C. 481, 484, 334 S.E.2d 525, 527 (Ct.App.1985). "[S]pecific performance ... is only available to enforce a contract that is fair, just, and equitable." *Hodge v. Shea*, 252 S.C. 601, 612, 168 S.E.2d 82, 87 (1969). "In order to compel specific performance, a court of equity must find: (1) there is clear evidence of a valid agreement; (2) the agreement had been partly carried into execution on one side with the approbation of the other; and (3) the party who comes to compel performance has performed his or her part, or has been and remains able and willing to perform his or her part of the contract." *Ingram*, 340 S.C. at 106, 531 S.E.2d at 291. *Campbell v. Carr*, 361 S.C. 258, 263-64, 603 S.E.2d 625, 627-28 (Ct. App. 2004).

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Dudek/Cross Contract is a conditional contract. Four conditions¹ are in the "printed matter" of the Contract. The parties agree these conditions require that "TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE." These conditions are found in Paragraph 3²; Paragraph 8;³ Paragraph 12;⁴ and Paragraph 19: Condition of Property (B. Inspection⁵) and (D. Wood Infestation⁶).
2. Ten conditions are set out in the Paragraph 29 Contingencies⁷. Notably, these ten conditions do not provide that time is of the essence. Moreover, these stipulations preempt the printed matter. These ten conditions are stated in three separate addenda, entitled Addendum A⁸, Addendum B⁹ and Addendum C¹⁰.
3. The intention of the parties and the meaning of the Dudek/Cross Contract can be gathered primarily from the contents of the writing itself. In other words, this Court finds that the Dudek/Cross Contract is clear and unequivocal from the four corners of the instrument. This Court finds that the intent of the parties is the sale and purchase of the Real Property. Even though the conditions, in the stipulated contingencies, do not expressly require that time is of the essence, these stipulations do not materially discharge the time of the essence provisions. The parties intended that this transaction would occur on or before a date certain, specifically, November 30, 2012. The Dudek/Cross Contract's meaning is determined by the Contract's contents alone. This meaning is express. This Court finds the Dudek/Cross Contract is clear and capable of legal interpretation. Thus, this Court's only function is to interpret its lawful meaning, discover the intention of the parties as found within the agreement, and give effect to it. See, *Heins v. Heins*, 344 S.C. 146, 158, 543 S.E.2d 224, 230 (Ct.App.2001). *Park Regency, LLC v. R & D Dev. of the Carolinas, LLC*, 402 S.C. 401, 412-13, 741 S.E.2d 528, 534 (Ct. App. 2012).
4. The meaning¹¹ of the Dudek and Cross Contract is to give effect to the sale and purchase of the Real Property, a unique residential real property. This objective, i.e., to give effect to the intentions of the parties, culminates at that point in time when Defendants Ferro deliver a deed of conveyance¹² to Defendants Dudek and Cross in exchange for the purchase price. The purchase price is Three Hundred Three Thousand Dollars (\$303,000.00). Defendants Ferro agree to pay Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) of Defendants Dudek and Cross' closing costs.
5. Paragraph 6 of the Contract provides: "Purchase price shall be paid as follows: ■ Subject to financing. Financing to be obtained by ■ Conventional." Cross testified she and Dudek were

prepared to pay 20% of the purchase price in cash, financing 80% with a conventional residential loan.

6. Paragraph 3's closing date condition is dependent on successful completion of all of the conditions. This condition cannot be enforced until Defendants Dudek and Cross can deliver to Defendants Ferro the purchase price, discussed *infra*. Additionally, Defendants Dudek and Cross are not obligated to deliver the purchase price until Defendants Ferro perform the conditions for which they are responsible¹³.

7. Defendants Ferro rely heavily on the failure of Defendants Dudek and Cross to have performed under Paragraph 8. A review of the condition reveals that the obligation to provide written satisfactory loan approval within 20 consecutive days that contains no credit, income, or asset conditions, unless otherwise set forth in the contract, is impossible. No other provision in the Dudek/Cross Contract alters the obligation to provide written satisfactory loan approval within 20 consecutive days that contains no credit, income, or asset conditions.

8. Defendants Dudek and Cross's loan officer testified that the conventional residential loan is subject to rules and regulation. Her testimony indicates her financial institution has loan criteria that change. This testimony infers these rules and regulations are also banking regulations. She stated the regulations change from time to time. She testified that her financial institution provides pre-authorized loan approvals upon a potential borrower's successful application for an approval of residential financing. She testified pre-approval loan letters contain conditions that cannot be changed. She testified pre-approved loans evolve into loan applications. Her testimony established that pre-approved loan applications become loan applications when a specific property is identified. Her testimony also established that a signed application is not necessary for a loan officer to begin initiating the lender's processing. She testified that loan applications, if the potential borrower meets the loan processing conditions, thereafter evolve into loan commitments. She testified loan commitments contain conditions. Further, her testimony that a loan commitment for a conventional residential loan will always be subject to conditions; such as, the borrower's assets and liabilities remain substantially the same as they were at the time of the loan's application¹⁴, continued verification of employment, mortgagee title insurance, free of liens and encumbrances, except those acceptable to the lender, *et. cet.*, (Plaintiff Exhibit 16, generally, and specifically, Residential Loan Commitment,

12/12/12). This testimony and documentary evidence is consistent with this Court taking judicial notice of the fact that conventional residential loan approvals without conditions are impossible to achieve.

9. Plaintiff Morphew and Defendants Ferro assert Defendants Dudek and Cross failed to perform this condition. This Court finds that an unconditional loan approval as described in Paragraph 8 is impossible¹⁵ to achieve. In fact, an unconditional commitment for a conventional residential loan is impossible. A conventional residential loan commitment is subject to conditions. The legal effect of this impossibility is to excuse the condition. Hence, the culmination of the transaction on or before November 30, 2012 is excused.

10. The Court however finds that the temporal condition that TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE cannot be ignored altogether because the intent of the Dudek/Cross Contract was to complete the transaction with TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE. Notably, this Court finds the term is a mutual condition that conversely infers mutual benefits. The Contract created conditions for both parties to observe the resounding term, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE¹⁶. In fact, Defendant Cross testified she immediately ordered a home inspection upon completion of the executed contract. (Transcript page 35, line 20). This act demonstrates Defendants Dudek and Cross understood the intent and meaning of the Dudek/Cross Contract.

11. The evidence reveals that Dudek and Cross had a completed home inspection by November 3, 2012. On that date, the evidence reveals Dudek and Cross provided Defendants Ferro a detailed list of critical concerns. The first of which embodies four points concerning the structural integrity¹⁷ of the residence¹⁸. Additional critical concerns include plumbing water damage (6 points), moisture control (4 points), electrical issues (6 points), safety (4 points), utility maintenance (2 points), and four miscellaneous points. (Plaintiff's Exhibit 5; Transcript page 36, lines 5-8).

12. The Court finds Defendants Dudek and Cross detail of problems they wanted addressed consistent with their rights under the contract (Plaintiff's Exhibit 3, Dudek/Cross Contract Addendum A, Item 1) and infers they acted on the condition time is of the essence to achieve the November 30, 2012 closing date. Moreover, development of the critical concerns list and notifying Defendants Ferro within 10 days of the execution date of the contract supports this Court finding Defendants Dudek and Cross acted with good faith were dealing fairly with

Defendants Ferro. The detail of critical concerns establishes the importance of clear communication to avoid delays that poor communication invariably creates. The Defendant Cross testified Mr. Ferro's reply was a "few simple lines" indicating that he would take care of the structural problems, the electrical problems, would make sure that the bath leak in his bathroom was repaired, the floor would be repaired if needed and a few and other things like that (Transcript page 36, lines 12 – 20). This evidence is not controverted (Plaintiff's Exhibit 17, see Thomas Ferro email, dated November 11, 2012 @ 2:51 P.M.). Also, the uncontroverted evidence reveals a copy of the approved subdivision plat, dated October 20, 2012, was received by Defendants Dudek and Cross the Friday after Thanksgiving. The effective utility of which is Defendants Dudek and Cross were delayed until at least November 26, 2012 to further pursue the purchase price through the conventional residential financing. Moreover, the evidence reveals a wood infestation report (CL 100) was not provided until November 30, 2012. That report revealed a number of problems.

13. The Court finds that Defendants Ferro failure to address each item of critical concern in the manner in which it was presented violates Defendants Ferro's obligation to deal in good faith and fairly with Defendants Dudek and Cross. The Court finds Defendants Ferro's failure to immediately respond to Defendants Dudek and Cross in writing to the critical concerns to eliminate, or at least lessen, misunderstandings for Defendants Dudek and Cross to evaluate facts regarding their due diligence, together with Defendants Ferro's failure to provide an approved subdivision plat until effectively four (4) days prior to the Paragraph 3 date, and the utter failure to provide a timely "clear" CL 100, demonstrate that Defendants Ferro did not perform their obligations under the contract. These failures prevented or hindered the ability of Defendants Dudek and Cross to complete their evaluation of the property as the Contract provides (Plaintiff's Exhibit 17, see Susan Nicolson email dated, November 27, 2012 @12:44 P.M.). Thus, this Court finds Defendants Ferro's failures excuse the obligation of Defendants Dudek and Cross to deliver the purchase price on or before November 30, 2012 by the method of payment to which the parties agreed. Restatement (First) of Contracts § 295 (1932).

14. This Court finds the actions of Defendants Ferro establish they failed to observe TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE, a mutual obligation that the contract required. The contract expresses this refrain five (5) times in the printed matter. The Court finds that Defendants Ferro's failure to

respond with dispatch, and with clear intentions, effectively waives their right to assert Defendants Dudek and Cross did not comply with their obligation to observe that TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

15. The Court finds Defendants Dudek and Cross are willing, able and ready purchasers of the Real Property.

16. The Court finds the Dudek/Ferro Contract is enforceable.

17. The Court finds Defendants Ferro shall complete the sale of the property to Defendants Dudek and Cross.

18. The Court finds the Defendants Dudek and Cross' Paragraph 8 conditions are impossible. Nonetheless, Defendants Dudek and Cross are bound by the obligation of good faith and fair dealing which, when considered with the intent and meaning of the Contract, requires them to pursue conventional residential loan financing without delay. Since, the payment method to consummate the sale is a conventional residential loan, the date of the closing shall occur as soon as practicable once Defendants Dudek and Cross procure the loan commitment. Defendants Dudek and Cross shall enlist the services of a closing attorney to assure the conditions of the conventional residential loan commitment shall proceed with the urgency of time is of the essence. Thus, the intent and meaning of the Contract is reset to the date this Order becomes the law of the case.

19. The obligation to observe time of the essence applies to both Defendants Dudek and Cross and to Defendants Ferro. Since both parties are obligated to observe that time is of the essence both parties enjoy a reciprocal benefit by this provision. The Court finds the mutual obligation that the parties must deal with one another in good faith and with fairness must be addressed. The obligation for good faith and fair dealing, implied in every contract, is essential in the Dudek/Cross contract relationship with Defendants Ferro.

20. In this case, had the Defendant Ferro reciprocated this mutual contractual obligation, the sale and purchase of the Real Property would have occurred nearly two years ago, and would have saved all parties tremendous time, effort, expense and perhaps, as importantly, emotional equity. Regrettably, Defendants Ferro allowed an innocent third party, Plaintiff Morphew, in this consolidated case, to become entangled in an existing contractual relationship. In this Court's view, Defendants Ferro's acts demonstrate they failed to exercise a simple rule of common

decency that is, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"¹⁹. A corollary to the noble principal is "[e]very contract imposes upon each party a duty of good faith and fair dealing in its performance and its enforcement." Restatement (Second) of Contracts § 205 (1981). See, *Birdseye v. Davis*, 13 S.C.L. 296, 297-98 (S.C. Const. App. 1822) (In the construction of a contract, *the intention of the parties* to be collected from the instrument, (if in writing,) should be constantly in view, and *in their performance, good faith and fair dealing is always required.*) (This Court's emphasis).

21. The Court finds Defendants Ferro are in default of the Dudek/Cross Contract for the reasons stated in this Order. Pursuant to Paragraph 16, the Court finds Defendants Dudek and Cross are entitled to recover reasonable costs, including a reasonable attorney fee. To this end, Defendants are at leave to apply, on or before ten (10) days of the date of this Order, for costs and attorneys fees due from Defendants Ferro. This Court will schedule a factual hearing on or after 10 days from the date of filing the application to ascertain a reasonable attorney fee and what costs should be recovered. If Defendants Dudek and Cross fail to apply for costs and attorneys fees within ten (10) days of the entry of this Order, Defendants Dudek and Cross shall be deemed to have waived their rights under Paragraph 16.

22. Defendants Dudek and Cross seek specific performance of the Dudek/Cross Contract. Defendants Dudek and Cross claim against Defendants Ferro allege a breach of contract; however, they maintain the property is unique and no adequate remedy at law is available. This Court agrees. The property is six and six-one thousandth (6.006) acres on the outskirts of Summerville, South Carolina between the developing communities of Knightsville and Jedburg. In the last decade and one-half this area has enjoyed significant growth in commercial development in a rural setting. The Real Property is close to new public elementary and middle schools, and Summerville's private school, Pinewood Preparatory School. It presents easy access to the Town of Summerville, and U. S. Highway 78, which is the predominant route between the Summerville and the County Seat, St. George. In contrast, it is a far cry from a condominium and significantly different than a home in a tract builder's residential subdivision. This Court finds the property unique. Specific performance should be granted because there is no adequate remedy at law. Specific enforcement of the contract is equitable between the parties. See, *Ingram v. Kasey's Assocs.*, 340 S.C. 98, 105, 531 S.E.2d 287, 291 (2000).

23. The Court finds the Dudek/Cross Contract is fair, just, and equitable. See, *Anthony v. Eve*, 109 S.C. 255, 263, 95 S.E. 513, 515 (1918); *McChesney v. Smith*, 105 S.C. 171, 176, 89 S.E. 639, 641 (1916).

24. Giving due regard to the terms of the contract and the facts and circumstances concerning the intent and meaning of the Dudek/Cross Contract, this Court finds it should order that done which ought to be done. Hence, compelling performance of the Dudek/Cross Contract is an equitable result. Moreover, giving effect to the intent and meaning of the contract by compelling Defendants Ferro to sell the property to Defendants Dudek and Cross promotes a just result.

25. The Court finds Defendants Dudek and Cross worked in good faith to consummate the sale. The evidence supports a finding Defendants Ferro acts and omissions demonstrated unfair dealing. Defendants Ferro fail to point to meaningful communication with Defendants Dudek and Cross whereas the acts of Defendants Dudek and Cross infer they acted with care, kept Defendants Ferro advised of the concerns they had. This Court finds Plaintiff's Exhibit 3 emails demonstrate Defendants Ferro obfuscated the intent and meaning of the contract in the performance of conditions incumbent upon them to fulfill. The Court finds Defendants Ferro acted without intent to fulfill the contract according to its plain terms. The circumstances imply Defendants Ferro attempted to use the contract's time of the essence provisions as an exemption, and tried to use it as a tool to avoid their having to deal with critical concerns raised by Defendants Dudek and Cross, who were acting at all times within their rights under the contract.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Findings of Fact shall be deemed Conclusions of Law. The Conclusions of Law shall be deemed Findings of Fact. Additional Conclusions of Law are as follows:

2. The Dudek/Cross Contract is valid.
3. The Dudek/Cross Contract is a conditional contract.
4. The Dudek/Cross Contract is fair, just, and equitable.
5. Paragraph 12 of the Dudek/Cross Contract is impossible to perform. Defendants Dudek and Cross's failure to comply with Paragraph 12 is excused. However, Defendants Dudek and Cross did all they could have done to achieve a conventional residential loan to complete the method of payment. Moreover, they carried into execution of the terms of the Contract with the approbation of Defendants Ferro.

6. Defendants Ferro frustrated the rights of Defendants Dudek and Cross to perform their due diligence. Thus, Defendants Ferro excused the intent and meaning of the contract to culminate on or before November 30, 2012 with TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

7. Defendants Ferro's acts and omissions waived their right to require this Court to give effect to the intent and meaning of the contract to culminate on or before November 30, 2012 with TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

8. Defendants Ferro are in default of the Dudek/Cross Contract. Defendants Dudek and Cross have a contractual right to pursue recovery of a reasonable attorney fee and costs of this action. In order to assert this right, Defendants Dudek and Cross shall apply to recover these costs and fees on or before ten (10) days of the entry of this order.

9. Defendants Dudek and Cross have demonstrated they are willing, able and ready to purchase the Real Property, however, since approximately two (2) years have passed since the agreement was originally made, in order to give effect to the intent and meaning of the contract, they are granted the right to update their due diligence requirements while they renew their loan application.

10. Defendants Dudek and Cross shall be entitled to an updated Residential Home Inspection in accord with Paragraph 19 (B) that is satisfactory to them.

11. Defendants Ferro shall procure a CL 100 in accord with Paragraph 19 (D) that is satisfactory to Defendants Dudek and Cross.

12. The Dudek/Cross Contract intends and means that Defendants Dudek and Cross are to purchase the Real Property for Three Hundred Three Thousand Dollars (\$303,000.00) and the method of payment shall be a conventional residential loan. The closing costs shall be paid as set forth in the Dudek/Cross Contract.

13. Defendants Ferro shall observe the obligation of good faith and fair dealing in performance of the Dudek/Cross Contract.

14. Defendants Ferro shall perform those conditions of the contract they are responsible for without delay. They shall inform in writing with specificity the Defendants Cross and Dudek what, if any, repairs they intend to complete to meet the satisfaction of Defendants Dudek and Cross. Although the finding of this Court established the Defendants right to personal satisfaction, the standard of satisfaction must meet the test of a reasonable person (*supra*,

endnote 13). In assessing what is reasonable the obligation of good faith and fair dealing prevails.

15. Defendants Ferro shall deliver a deed upon payment of the purchase price that complies with the provisions of Paragraph 3, and Addendum A and Addendum B of the Special Stipulations.

16. This Order shall be construed to terminate the Morphew Contract upon the exchange of the purchase price by Defendants Dudek and Cross for delivery of the deed by Defendants Ferro. Hence, at that point in time, Defendants Dudek and Cross grant of mortgage lien to their conventional residential loan lender shall be free of the encumbrance of the Morphew Contract.

17. The Morphew Contract cannot be specifically performed unless the Dudek/Cross Contract is terminated because a condition of the contract cannot be performed.

18. If the Dudek/Cross Contract is terminated, Defendants Dudek and Cross shall notify this Court and Plaintiff Morphew immediately, and file with this Court the written termination of Contract specifying the condition of the contract that could not be performed.

19. The Morphew Contract is a valid contract.

20. The Morphew Contract is a conditional contract.

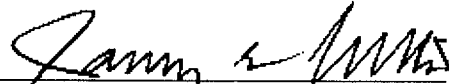
21. The Morphew Contract is fair, just and equitable.

22. Thus, if the Dudek/Cross Contract is terminated, Defendants Ferro specifically perform Plaintiff Morphew Contract according to its terms.

23. Since the Morphew Contract is an enforceable contract conditioned on the termination of Defendants Dudek and Cross Contract, Defendants Ferro are not in default of the Morphew Contract. Absent a default, Plaintiff Morphew is not entitled to recover her costs and attorney's fee. NOW THEREFORE, IT IS

ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED that Defendants Ferro shall deliver a deed of conveyance to the Real Property to Defendants Dudek and Cross in exchange for the purchase price in accord with the terms of sale and purchase contained in the Dudek/Cross Contract as directed to be given effect by the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law set forth in this Order. AND, IT IS

SO ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED!


James E. Chellis
Dorchester County Master-in-Equity

St. George, South Carolina
November 6, 2014

¹ Paragraph 11, is not contested, however, this accounts for a fifth condition with Time is of the Essence. The Court considers it in construing the intent and meaning of the Dudek/Cross Contract.

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3. **CONVEYANCE SHALL BE MADE:** Conveyance shall be made subject to all easements as well as covenants of record (provided they do not make the title unmarketable) and to all governmental statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations. Seller agrees to convey by marketable title and deliver a proper general warranty deed, if applicable, free of encumbrances, except as herein stated. Seller agrees to pay all statutory deed recording fees. The deed shall be delivered at the stipulated place of closing, and transaction closed on or before ~~11/30 December 07~~ 2012, not later than 9:00 p.m. Time is of the essence. Seller and Buyer authorize their respective attorneys and the settlement agent to furnish to Listing Broker and Selling Broker copies of the final HUD-1 settlement statement for the transaction for their review prior to closing.

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8. **LOAN PROCESSING AND APPLICATION:** Buyer's obligation under this agreement is contingent on Buyer obtaining said loan. Buyer shall apply for a maximum 90.000 % loan (loan-to-value ratio) within 10 consecutive days from the execution of this Agreement and shall provide Seller with written satisfactory loan approval within 20 consecutive days that contains no credit, income, or asset conditions, unless otherwise set forth in this contract. Time is of the essence. Should the Buyer fail to make loan application or receive approval within said period, and to diligently pursue the application, the Seller shall have the option to terminate this Agreement, with written notice. Buyer also agrees to provide all documents or information requested by the lending company in a prompt and timely manner. Buyer will take any action that is needed or requested by Lender to process the loan application. Buyer further hereby gives permission to Lender to disclose pertinent information concerning the Buyer's credit-worthiness or any other information needed for the loan processing to the listing or cooperating broker(s) or agent(s). If Buyer fails to comply with these above contingencies, Buyer shall be in default of this agreement subject to the terms of paragraph 16.
FHA Mortgage Insurance will will not be added to the mortgage. VA funding fee will will not be added to the mortgage.

4

12. **EXTENSION AGREEMENT:** If the transaction has not closed within the stipulated time limit because a contingency has not been satisfied through no fault of either party, then both parties agree to extend this agreement for a period not to exceed 15 consecutive days from the original closing date. Closing shall occur within this time extension, but in no event shall closing occur later than the above extension date. Time is of the essence.

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(B) **Inspection:** Buyer at Buyer's expense shall have the privilege and responsibility of inspecting the structure, square footage, environmental concerns including but not limited to mold, radon gas, lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards, wetlands study, appurtenant buildings, heating, air conditioning, electrical and plumbing systems as well as built-in appurtenant equipment or appliances. All inspections shall be completed by November 20, 2012. In the event repairs are necessary to place the heating system, air conditioning, plumbing, and electrical system to be conveyed in operative condition and to make the roof free of leaks, and the dwelling structurally sound, the Seller shall be notified in writing of the specific defects or deficiencies within 48 hours after the inspection date mentioned above. **Time is of the essence.** If Buyer fails to notify Seller within this time, Buyer shall have waived any and all rights under the terms of this paragraph. If Lender's commitment requires any additional inspections or certifications, these are to be provided by Buyer.

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(D) **Wood Infestation Report:** If the property to be sold has been previously occupied, The Buyer The Seller shall, at their expense, have the property inspected and shall obtain a current Wood Infestation Report (CL100) from a licensed and bonded pest control operator, on or before November 30, 2012. **Time is of the essence.** If Buyer is responsible for having the property inspected as indicated above, but fails to have the property inspected by this date, Buyer shall have waived any and all rights under the terms of this paragraph. The Seller makes no warranties with regard to matters covered by such report or any other improvement unless specifically stated in this agreement. If the infestation report reveals the presence of or damage by termite infestation or other wood destroying organisms, Seller shall

remedy such deficiencies, subject to section (E) below, and shall furnish Buyer with a report of a qualified inspector that property is free from infestation or damage herein mentioned or that infestation or damage has been treated and/or repaired as appropriate in a workmanlike manner on or before closing.

If the property to be sold has not been previously occupied, Seller shall certify that the dwelling has been treated by soil poisoning for the prevention of termites and other wood destroying organisms and shall provide the Buyer, at closing, a written certification from a licensed pest control operator.

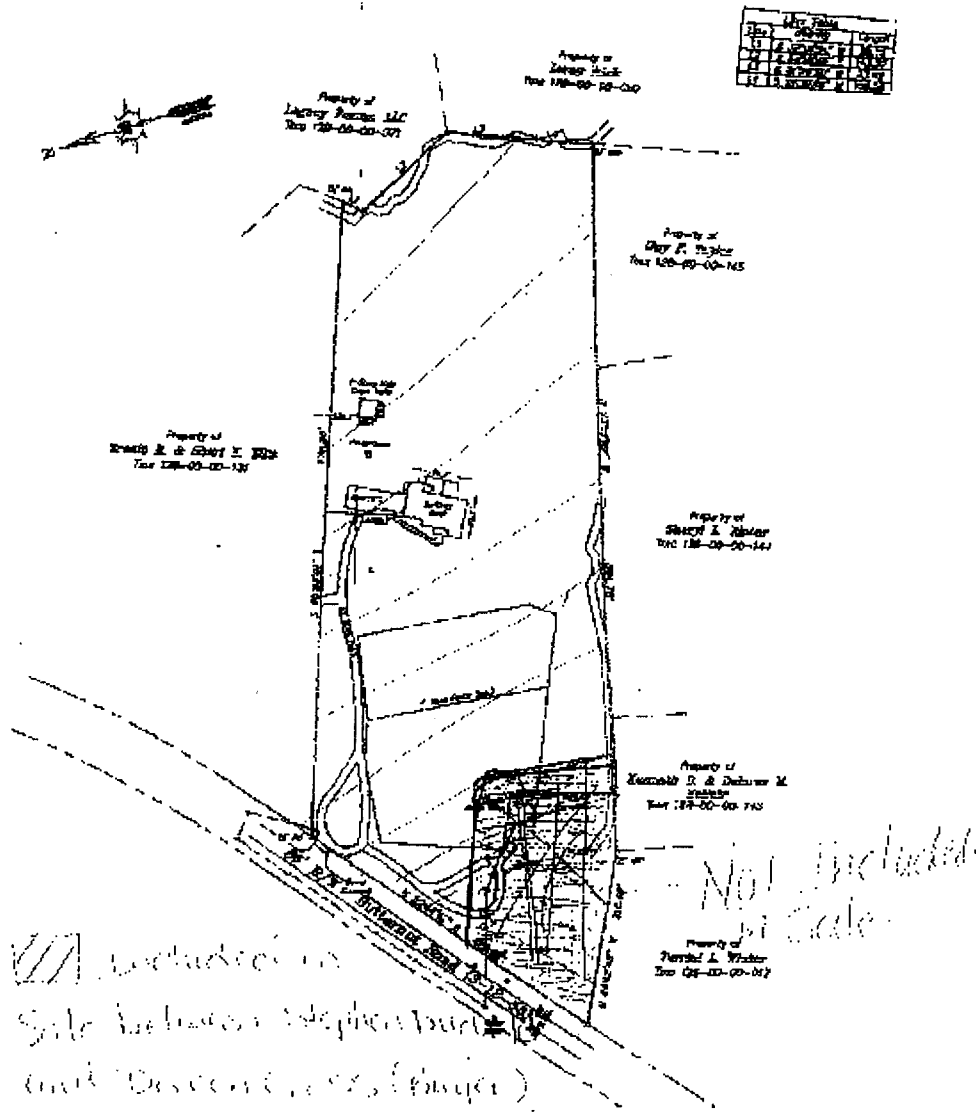
29. **CONTINGENCIES:** These stipulations shall preempt printed matter herein; (attach and reference addendum if necessary) See attached addendum (A) (B) (C)

The undersigned Parties hereby agree as follows.

1. Buyer total satisfaction of home inspection and CL100. 2. Seller to make free all liens and clear, insurable and marketable title. 3. Seller to have all utilities on the home for buyer to have a home inspection done. 4. Seller to provide any and all paperwork of septic tank. If septic tank hasn't been serviced in the past yr. then Seller agrees to have it serviced. 5. Seller agrees to have the property subdivided to include in this sale the 2340 sq house, storage bldg and 6 acres. Any costs will be the responsibility of the Seller. Seller to give copies of any and all paperwork of this process to include copies of the survey. Cont. next to (B) + (C)

Also remaining property that is subdivided from this sale shall have restrictions of NO MOBILE HOMES allowed. 7. If Seller has a current termite bond then Seller shall transfer to Buyer at no cost to buyer. 8. Seller to re-do SC Sellers Disclosure due to not legible of what is currently on the H&S. 9. Seller to leave current 2 ac. fencing paddock where it currently is. 10. Seller to leave any and all materials used in construction of home to included but not limited to wood flooring material, fence material, etc.

Appendix



¹¹ The meaning of the contract and the intent of the parties to it is one and the same thing. To interpret the lawful meaning is to discover the intention of the parties as found within the agreement. Our Court acknowledges contractual language coupling the terms "intent and meaning." Cf., *Mordecai v. Stults*, 16 S.C. 622, 622 (1882) (interpreting a power of sale in a mortgage, the Court acknowledges language of the mortgage, "the conditions and recitals thereof, according to the true intent and meaning"); *Hext v. Jarrell*, 34 S.C.L. 11, 14 (S.C. App. L. 1848) (the intent and meaning of a deed); *Edwards v. Sartor*, 69 S.C. 540, 48 S.E. 537, 537 (1904) (the Court acknowledges language of "true intent and meaning of note and condition thereunder written" in a mortgage, see, also, *Kaphan v. Ryan*, 16 S.C. 352, 353 (1882) (true intent and meaning of said bond, secured by a mortgage); *Crawford v. Owens*, 79 S.C. 59, 60 S.E. 236, 237 (1908) (the Court acknowledges language of "the terms of the contract according to its true intent and meaning" addressing a bond surety for the faithful performance of a contract); *Sutterwhite's Adm'rs v. McKie*, 16 S.C.L. 397, 398 (S.C. Const. App. 1824) ("the obvious meaning and intent of the parties to the contract.").

¹² Paragraph 3 describes the particulars of the conveyance; this provision is modified by conditions set out in condition of the Special Stipulations.

¹³ Addendum A requires the Paragraph 19 (B) and Paragraph (D) conditions to meet a standard totally acceptable to the Buyer. See, *Restatement (First) of Contracts § 265 (1932)*: A promise in terms conditional on the promisor's satisfaction with an agreed exchange, gives rise to no duty of immediate performance until such satisfaction; but where it is doubtful whether words mean that a promise is conditional on the promisor's personal satisfaction with an agreed exchange, or on the sufficiency of that exchange to satisfy a reasonable man in the promisor's position, the latter interpretation is adopted. The Court finds the term "total satisfaction" means Dudek and Cross are not required to pay the purchase price until Dudek and Cross are personally satisfied with the Paragraph 19 (B) & (D) conditions. In any event, Cross testified despite Defendants Ferros' failure to answer in kind the questions concerning the home inspection and after she procured a structural engineer's report acceptable to her (she had a relative, who is an engineer, review the calculations) she was satisfied that the residence was structurally sound a reservation contained in her home inspection report. Dudek testified he never received a satisfactory C.I. 100 (Transcript page, 104, line 23). Hence, she did not have an opportunity to determine if it was satisfactory.

¹⁴ The Court takes Judicial Notice that at a conventional residential loan closing borrowers are required to sign a Uniform Residential Loan application. The application is made under oath. This fact further supports the impossibility of the Paragraph 8 condition.

¹⁵ Impossibility that would discharge the duty to perform a promise excuses a condition if (a) . . . or (b) existence or occurrence of the condition is no material part of the exchange for the promisor's performance and the discharge of the promisor will operate as a forfeiture. *Restatement (First) of Contracts § 301 (1932)*. This Court applies this rule to the facts of this case as follows:

Dudek and Cross had a duty (promise to perform) to procure unconditional financing within 20 days of signing the contract. The Contract calls for a conventional residential loan. Unconditional residential loan financing is impossible. The occurrence of the condition to procure unconditional financing in 20 days is not a material part of the exchange because delivery of the deed depends on delivery of the purchase price not procurement of the loan within twenty days of the signing of the contract and the discharge of Dudek and Cross's duty to procure unconditional loan approval would operate as a forfeiture of the contract.

¹⁶ It is well established in this state that time is not of the essence of a contract to convey land unless made so by its terms expressly or by implication. *Bishop v. Tolbert*, 249 S.C. 289, 153 S.E.2d 912 (1967). When the contract does not include a provision that "time is of the essence," the law implies that it is to be done within a reasonable time. *Hobgood v. Pennington*, 300 S.C. 309, 387 S.E.2d 690 (Ct.App.1989). In equity, strict compliance with time limits contained in a contract will not ordinarily be enforced, except with regard to option contracts. *Dargan v. Page*, 222 S.C. 520, 73 S.E.2d 705 (1952). *Faulkner v. Millar*, 319 S.C. 216, 219-20, 460 S.E.2d 378, 380 (1995).

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¹⁷ Defendant Cross testified:

"the piers were not supporting anything, they were jus there. I didn't understand why all these piers were there, they were not touching the house (Transcript page 38, lines 1-3) Dudek corroborates and elaborates: "We were concerned about the extra piers under the crawl space because they were just there, they weren't at supporting anything, that surprised me. And yes, we were concerned about the crack tile in the front foyer and in the master bathroom. The back porch where the concrete was sinking, I thought it was just an add on so I wasn't sure, if it was an add on it was just settling, that didn't worry me that much. But the biggest thing was the structure of the house, the extra piers there for the supports because they were there and they weren't doing anything (Transcript page 98, l. 24 – page 99, l. 9).

¹⁸ The house is a fairly heavy house, it is made of steel and it has installed CompCore on the outside of it with rebar in it, so I was concerned about the structure (Transcript page 38, lines 6 – 9).

¹⁹ The moral principle, that men in their intercourse with each other should act with perfect fairness, is as broad as the foundation on which society is erected, and, in some form or other, we find it incorporated into the laws of every well regulated society. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is the substratum of every civilized code; and the well known rule that no one shall profit by his own wrong, or profit by his own fraud, is built upon it; and wherever it is apparent that one man has profited by fraud and circumvention, to the loss or injury of another, he must respond. *Minter v. Dent*, 37 S.C.L. 205, 207 (S.C. App. L. & Eq. 1832)