

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In the Court of Appeals

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APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY SC Court of Appeals  
Court of Common Pleas

The Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr., Circuit Court Judge

App. Case No. 2015-002297

John Doe,

Appellant,

v.

Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and  
Town of Sullivans Island (S.I.),  
S. I. Zoning Administrator, and  
S. I. Building Dept., Individually  
and In Official Capacity,

Respondents.

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**BRIEF OF APPELLANT**

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For Appellant

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## STATEMENT OF ISSUES ON APPEAL

1. Respondents engaged in fraud upon the court in the presence of the court as documented in the attached transcript dated April 7, 2015, correspondence, and affidavit, which was timely served and filed; despite timely objection, the lower court erred in failing to address it thereby becoming an unwitting accomplice and/or enabler in wrongdoing perpetrated by untrustworthy Respondents' Counsel as officers of the court.
2. Fraud upon the court in the presence of the court led to wrongful dismissal, it materially prejudiced the Appellant, and it is not moot even after dismissal. Controlling precedent provides that failure to exercise discretion under these circumstances is an abuse of discretion reversible as a matter of law.
3. The BZA hearing on the merits at the request of the property owner vests jurisdiction in the BZA at the pre-litigation stage; statutory authority provides that party with the right to appeal and to request mediation after the hearing; pursuant to the statute, Appellant timely filed notice of appeal and mediation; the lower court erred because, pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825, the request for mediation "must" be granted. The lower court erred because it has no jurisdiction at the **pre-litigation** stage until and unless mediation is unsuccessful.
4. Even assuming the lower court had jurisdiction at the pre-litigation mediation stage, after BZA hearing on the merits at the request of the property owner and after timely filing of notice of appeal herein with request for pre-litigation mediation, statutory authority and legislative intent pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825 provide that the requested mediation "must be granted"; the lower court erred in failing to grant mediation.
5. Public policy supports the request for mediation after BZA hearing on the merits involving violation of impervious surface limitations and storm water runoff adversely affecting the property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA.
6. The substantive rights of the Appellant have been prejudiced and the lower court order should be reversed.

## **FACTS OF THE CASE**

Appellant is a property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA. After de novo hearing on the merits, the Appellant timely filed NOA with request for pre-litigation mediation. Thereafter, unbeknownst to Appellant, untrustworthy Respondents' counsel prejudiced the matter and the Appellant's interests by improper ex parte contact with the lower court, by seeking improper dismissal, and by making material misrepresentations/omissions of fact in order to obtain improper dismissal. On information and belief, the lower court, the lower court clerk, and the lower court clerk's conscientious staff were all misled and co-opted to perpetrate fraud upon the court in the presence of the court by untrustworthy officers of the court. Appellant timely appeals wrongful lower court order violating unambiguously expressed legislative intent pursuant to statute that pre-litigation "mediation must be granted." S.C. Code § 6-29-825.

## **STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

Legislative intent and statutory authority provide a property owner, whose

land is the subject of a decision of the BZA, the right to a hearing and, after that hearing, the right to file notice of appeal with request for pre-litigation mediation. The lower court erred in failing to grant the property owner's request for pre-litigation mediation.

### **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

Generally, appeal from a final order of the circuit court following its review of the zoning board's decision is to the court of appeals. S.C. Code § 6-29-850; Rule 203(d), SCACR. Appellate courts regard appeals from zoning decisions in the same manner as appeals from other circuit court judgments in law cases. *Petersen v. City of Clemson*, 312 S.C.162, 169-70, 439 S.E.2d 317, 322 (Ct.App.1993) (citing *Bishop v. Hightower*, 292 S.C. 358, 360, 356 S.E.2d 420, 421 (Ct.App.1987)). Even if a court disagrees with a zoning board's decision, the court will refrain from substituting its judgment for that of the zoning board unless the decision "is arbitrary, capricious, has no reasonable relation to a lawful purpose, or if the [zoning] board has abused

its discretion.” *Rest. Row Assocs. v. Horry Cnty.*, 335 S.C. 209, 216, 516 S.E.2d 442, 446 (1999). “An abuse of discretion occurs when a trial court's decision is unsupported by the evidence or controlled by an error of law.” *Cnty. of Richland v. Simpkins*, 348 S.C. 664, 668, 560 S.E.2d 902, 904 (Ct.App.2002). The alleged errors at issue in this case are errors of law. This Court is free to decide matters of law with no particular deference to the lower court. *Pressley v. REA Constr. Co.*, 374 S.C. 283, 287, 648 S.E.2d 301, 303 (Ct.App.2007).

## ARGUMENT

1. Respondents engaged in fraud upon the court in the presence of the court as documented in the attached transcript dated April 7, 2015, correspondence, and affidavit, which was timely served and filed; despite timely objection, the lower court erred in failing to address it thereby becoming an unwitting accomplice and/or enabler in wrongdoing perpetrated by untrustworthy Respondents' Counsel as officers of the court.

Specifically, respondents failed to provide required statutory notice as documented by the attached copy of the affidavit with the Postmaster's letter. Appellant received no notice at all prior to that letter. Appellant received no notice prior to dismissal. Moreover, respondents' certificate of service (copy attached) does not comply with the required statutory notice at the address listed on the attached copy of the Charleston County Circuit Court's Public Index website specifying the proper address. Rule 5, SCRPC. Respondents failed and/or refused to employ the proper address, which did in fact deprive the other side of notice. The appellant did not receive timely notice and the appellant is prejudiced thereby. Materially, as per the correspondence dated April 27, 2015, respondents' actions in contacting the postmaster with the correct address only after denial of any meaningful opportunity to be heard is consistent with respondents' bad faith and/or the appearance of impropriety. Respondents have apparently misled the lower court. Respondents' attempt to gain unfair advantage and to deprive the other side

of due process and meaningful opportunity to be heard is, at best, unflattering.

Respondents' lack of diligence is demonstrated by the Postmaster's correspondence dated April 27, 2015. Respondents knew the other side had not received notice or the proposed order. Respondents failed to timely disclose this material fact, thereby wrongfully inducing the lower court to act on respondents' false representations and/or material omissions that the other side was on notice and was in receipt of the proposed order. Respondents' actions establish the fact that respondents knew appellant had not received notice thereby engaged in impermissible ex parte communications. Rule 5, SCRCPP, is the specific rule with statutory authority requiring respondents to copy the other side, which respondents violated. From *Burgess v. Stern*, South Carolina case law and rule-making authorities are well synchronized on the prohibition against ex parte contacts. In *Herring v. Retail Credit Co.*, 266 S.C. 455, 224 S.E.2d 663 (1976), the judicial practice of merely signing an order prepared by counsel of one party was condemned. This Court advised the Bench and the Bar that not only do such orders deprive the reviewing Court of adequate records on appeal, but also deny to the deprived party an opportunity to be heard in matters which affect them. Id....

Canon 3(A)(4), Rule 501, Code of Judicial Conduct, SCACR, states: "A judge should ..., except as authorized by law, neither initiate or consider ex parte or other communications concerning a pending or impending matter." While Canon 3(A)(4)

guards against ex parte indiscretion, it also strives to eliminate the appearance of impropriety. This issue was discussed succinctly in the case of *In re: Wisconsin Steel*, 48 B.R. 753 (D.Ill.1985). The Court in *Wisconsin Steel* noted:

It is rarely possible to prove to the satisfaction of the party excluded from the communication that nothing prejudicial occurred. The protestations of the participants that the communication was entirely innocent may be true, but they have no way of showing it except by their own self-serving declaration. This is why the prohibition is not against "prejudicial" ex parte communications, but against ex parte communications. *Burgess v. Stern*, 428 S.E.2d 880, 311 S.C. 326 (S.C., 1992).

From another case, the Court cautioned: "We note the Bench and Bar were cautioned to strictly observe the Canons governing judicial and attorney conduct with regard to ex parte contacts as they relate to maintaining the appearance of propriety and to comply with both the **letter and the spirit** of Opinion No. 2-1988 of the Advisory Committee on Standards of Judicial Conduct in *Burgess v. Stern*, 311 S.C. 326, 428 S.E.2d 880 (1993)." *Jennings, Matter of*, 468 S.E.2d 869, 321 S.C. 440, fn. 4 (S.C., 1996). In sum, respondents made misrepresentations and/or material omissions and, thereby, perpetrated fraud upon the court when they knew and failed to timely disclose the fact that the other side had no timely notice of the proposed order, the hearing, or other documents. Appellant expressly objects to respondents' ex parte contacts and is prejudiced thereby.

Further, the order is reversible based on error of law and material fact,

including but not limited to, the case of *Wells Fargo Bank, NA, v. Smith*, 398 S.C. 487, 730 S.E.2d 328 (S.C. App., 2012), which provides as follows: "A reversal is required when the trial court's ruling exceeds the limits and scope of the particular motion before it. *Skinner v. Skinner*, 257 S.C. 544, 549–50, 186 S.E.2d 523, 526 (1972)...One of the basic purposes of a notice of motion is to apprise the opposing party of the relief sought and the grounds therefor. Ordinarily a court may not grant relief beyond the limits or scope of such notice. *Ford v. Calhoun*, 53 S.C. 106, 30 S.E.2d 830; *Coogler v. California Ins. Co.*, 192 S.C. 54, 5 S.E.2d 459; *Wildhagen v. Ayers*, 225 S.C. 384, 82 S.E.2d 609." In the instant case, no statutory notice was given and no notice was sent to the proper address as posted on the Charleston County Clerk of Court's website (see attached) at a meaningful time. Any after-the-fact notice could not cure the prejudice caused by respondents' actions which are designed to, and which in fact did, deprive the other side of any meaningful opportunity to be heard. The lower court order should be reversed.

Moreover, the statute, S.C. Code § 6–29–820(B), provides as follows:

(B) A property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the board of appeals may appeal either:

- (1) as provided in subsection (A); or
- (2) by filing a notice of appeal with the circuit court accompanied by a request for pre-litigation mediation in accordance with Section 6-29-825.

Any notice of appeal and request for pre-litigation

mediation must be filed within thirty days after the decision of the board is postmarked.

Case law confirms that the timely notice of appeal is proper because appellant is a property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA. Respondents are well aware of this fact. The testimony of appellant's expert at the board meeting was unopposed and was supported by evidence at the hearing in the form of a current land survey as well as documentation of the flooding and standing water lapping against residential dwellings occurring as a direct and proximate result of wrongdoing and violation of the zoning ordinances. In *Spanish Wells*, the Court of Appeals held that owners of property adjacent to and in the near vicinity of a development are persons with a substantial interest and, as a consequence, had standing to appeal. *Spanish Wells Property Owners Assn. v. Board of Adjustment*, 292 S.C. 542, 357 S.E.2d 487 (Ct.App.1987), reversed in part on other grounds, 295 S.C. 67, 367 S.E.2d 160 (1988). Respondents have misconstrued *Bevivino*, which supports appellant's position. The Court of Appeals found that close proximity is dispositive. *Bevivino v. Town of Mount Pleasant Bd. of Zoning Appeals*, 402 S.C. 57, 737 S.E.2d 863 (S.C. App., 2013).

With regard to *Newton*, respondents again have misconstrued the case. *Newton v. Zoning Bd. of Appeals for Beaufort Cnty.*, 396 S.C. 112, 719 S.E.2d 282 (S.C. App. 2011). The statute, S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B), is designed to encourage

**pre-litigation** mediation by **NOT** requiring the filing of a petition until and unless pre-litigation mediation is unsuccessful. In *Newton*, the Court made clear, “This procedure does not allow for **issue identification, or even party identification, prior to the filing of a petition** with the circuit court.” *Id.*, p. 284 (emphasis supplied). Accordingly, the lower court erred.

Due process requires notice, meaningful opportunity to respond, and judicial review. It is fair to say that respondents themselves would want notice. For this reason as well as others, respondents' motion should have been dismissed and the purpose of the statute in promoting **pre-litigation** mediation should be supported. S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B). These are matters of public importance affecting Sullivans Island, Charleston County, and our State as well as affecting precious coastal resources and water quality. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

2. Fraud upon the court in the presence of the court led to wrongful dismissal, it materially prejudiced the Appellant, and it is not mooted even after dismissal; the lower court order is reversible as a matter of law because the issue is not moot. Controlling precedent provides that failure to exercise discretion under these circumstances is an abuse of discretion reversible as a matter of law.

In *Creighton v. Coligny Plaza Ltd.*, 334 S.C. 96, 512 S.E.2d 510 (Ct. App. 1998), the Court of Appeals held the trial judge erred by dismissing the appellant's discovery abuse motion as moot even though the verdict was in favor of the defendant. *Chas. Lumber v. Miller Housing*, 525 S.C. 869, 338 S.E.2d 171, fn. 5 (SC 2000). The *Creighton* case provides in pertinent part:

The burden is on the appealing party to demonstrate that the trial court abused its discretion. *Dunn*, 298 S.C. 499, 381 S.E.2d 734. A reviewing court may find abuse of discretion where an appellant shows that the lower court's conclusion is based upon an error of law or without evidentiary support. *Fontaine v. Peitz*, 291 S.C. 536, 354 S.E.2d 565 (1987). "When a trial judge is vested with discretion, but his ruling reveals no discretion was, in fact, exercised, an error of law has occurred." *Id.* at 538, 354 S.E.2d at 566. If a court has discretionary authority, but rules as a matter of law, the matter should be reconsidered and passed on as a discretionary matter. *Id.*

Based upon our understanding of the record, the Creightons filed two motions for discovery protection and costs pursuant to Rules 26 and 30, SCRPC. The trial judge held a pre-trial hearing at which he denied all discovery motions except those pertaining to damages. However, the trial judge reserved ruling on these motions. After a verdict was entered in favor of the respondents in the liability phase of the trial, the trial judge dismissed the remaining discovery abuse motions as moot. We agree with the Creightons that the trial court erred in finding the remaining discovery motions were moot.

Although there is no South Carolina precedent dispositive of this issue, federal case law indicates discovery abuse motions do not become moot when a case is terminated. See *Cooter & Gell v. Hartman Corp.*, 496 U.S. 384, 396, 110 S.Ct. 2447, 110 L.Ed.2d 359 (1990) ("[L]ike the imposition of costs, attorney's fees, and contempt sanctions, a Rule 11 sanction is not a judgment on the action's

merits, but simply requires the determination of a collateral issue, which may be made after the principal suit's termination."); *Roadway Exp., Inc. v. Piper*, 447 U.S. 752, 100 S.Ct. 2455, 65 L.Ed.2d 488 (1980) (after case dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1927 and Rule 37, FRCP, Court remanded case to district court for determination of 37(b) motion for costs and attorney's fees); *Hedrick v. Comptroller of Currency, Washington, D.C.*, 68 F.3d 477 (7th Cir.1995) ("dismissal of the underlying case alone does not moot the question of Rule 11 sanctions"); *Heinrichs v. Marshall and Stevens, Inc.*, 921 F.2d 418 (2d Cir. 1990) (affirming district court award of Rule 37 sanctions subsequent to a grant of summary judgment); *Mercy v. Suffolk Cnty., New York*, 748 F.2d 52, 56 (2d Cir.1984) ("The sanctions provided in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure are designed to prevent any litigant, whether or not he ultimately prevails, from being put to discovery expense that is unjustified."); *Penthouse International, Ltd. v. Playboy Enter., Inc.*, 663 F.2d 371 (2d Cir. 1981) (case remanded to district court for determination of Rule 37 sanctions despite complaint's dismissal); *Merritt v. International Bro. of Boilermakers*, 649 F.2d 1013 (5th Cir. 1981) (interpreting *Roadway Express* as implicit recognition of district court's authority to assess attorney's fees and discovery expenses under Rule 37 post-judgment).

The record reflects the trial judge's disagreement with defense counsels' conduct during some depositions. At the hearing, the trial judge indicated he would consider ordering the respondents to pay the costs of bringing the out of state doctors in to testify concerning damages if the Creightons obtained a favorable verdict at the liability trial. Obviously, after a respondents' verdict was entered at the liability trial, this alternative was no longer available. However, the unavailability of a proposed sanction does not moot the issue of discovery abuse itself.

Additionally, the trial judge's failure to rule on all the Creightons' discovery abuse allegations contravenes the policies underlying the Rule's enactment. Discovery sanctions are imposed "to penalize those whose conduct may be deemed to warrant such a sanction, and to deter those who might be tempted to such conduct in the absence of such a deterrent." *Karppi v. Greenville Terrazzo Co.*, 327 S.C. 538, 545, 489 S.E.2d 679, 683 (Ct.App.1997) (quoting *National Hockey League v. Metropolitan Hockey Club, Inc.*, 427 U.S. 639, 96 S.C. 2778, 49 L.Ed.2d 747 (1976)). If respondents' counsel has taken action warranting sanctions, dismissing the issue without ruling on its merits allows them to go unpenalized. Such action also decreases the likelihood of others being deterred from similar misconduct. Therefore, we find the trial judge erred in failing to rule on the remaining discovery abuse motions and remand the case for disposition of these issues.

*Creighton v. Coligny Plaza Ltd.*, 334 S.C. 96, 512 S.E.2d 510 (Ct.App.1998).

As an historical note and for the record, respondents' counsel listed in the *Creighton* case (*supra*) includes the self-same untrustworthy respondents' counsel herein conducting untrustworthy business as usual unfazed. *Creighton v. Coligny Plaza Ltd.*, 334 S.C. 96, 512 S.E.2d 510 (Ct. App. 1998). Respondents' counsel has taken action warranting sanctions herein and that wrongdoing is NOT moot. Public policy abhors abuse of discretion. Abuse of discretion in failing to address that wrongdoing condones, facilitates, and, as the case above reflects with regard to Respondents' untrustworthy officers of the court herein, promotes future wrongdoing undeterred, if not encouraged. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

3. The BZA hearing on the merits at the request of the property owner vests jurisdiction in the BZA at the pre-litigation stage; statutory authority provides the party, a property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA, with the right to appeal and to request mediation after that hearing; pursuant to the statute, the Appellant filed notice of appeal within 30 days after the BZA decision was postmarked; the lower court erred because, pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825, the request for mediation “must” be granted. The lower court erred because it has no jurisdiction at the pre-litigation stage until and unless mediation is unsuccessful.

The pertinent statute, S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B), provides as follows:

(B) A property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the board of appeals may appeal either:

- (1) as provided in subsection (A); or
- (2) by filing a notice of appeal with the circuit court accompanied by a request for pre-litigation mediation in accordance with Section 6-29-825.

Any notice of appeal and request for pre-litigation mediation must be filed within thirty days after the decision of the board is postmarked.

The BZA hearing on the merits at the request of the property owner vests jurisdiction in the BZA at the pre-litigation stage; statutory authority provides the party, a property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA, with the right to appeal and to request mediation; pursuant to the statute, the Appellant timely filed notice of appeal within 30 days after the BZA decision was postmarked; the lower court erred because, pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825, the request for mediation “must” be granted; and the lower court has no jurisdiction at the pre-litigation stage until and unless mediation is unsuccessful.

“When interpretation of a statute is required, ‘words must be given their plain and ordinary meaning’ without resort to subtle or forced construction to limit or expand the statute's operation.” *State v. Blackmon*, 304 S.C. 270, 273, 403 S.E.2d 660, 662 (1991). Accordingly, the lower court opinion should be reversed. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

4. Even assuming the lower court had jurisdiction at the pre-litigation mediation stage, after BZA hearing on the merits at the request of the property owner and after timely filing of notice of appeal herein with request for pre-litigation mediation, statutory authority and legislative intent pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825 provide that the requested mediation “must be granted”; the lower court erred in failing to grant mediation.

Our State's barrier islands and beaches are a precious public resource for the people of South Carolina. While the islands are a finite resource, a bevy of competing environmental, economic, and social uses seek to lay claim to them. The legislative branch has made policy decisions as to how those uses should be balanced in order to maximize the benefit to the people of South Carolina and

enacted statutes to fulfill those policy decisions. The task falls to the courts to ensure that those statutes and regulations are correctly applied. See *Kiawah Devt. Partners v. S.C. Dep't of Health & Envtl. Control*, 411 S.C. 16, 766 S.E.2d 707, 710 (S.C. 2014).

By analogy, in *Chevron*, the landmark administrative law case, the United States Supreme Court summarized:

When a court reviews a BZA's construction of the *statutes and regulations*, it is confronted with two questions. First, always, is the question whether *the Legislature* has directly spoken to the precise question at issue. If the intent of *the Legislature* is clear, that is the end of the matter, for the court, as well as the BZA, must give effect to the unambiguously expressed intent of *the Legislature*. If, however, the court determines *the Legislature* has not directly addressed the precise question at issue, the court does not simply impose its own construction on the statute, as would be necessary in the absence of a BZA interpretation. Rather, if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the BZA's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.

*Id.* at 842–43, 104 S.Ct. 2778 (emphasis supplied); *see also Bowles v. Seminole Rock & Sand Co.*, 325 U.S. 410, 414, 65 S.C. 1215, 89 S.E.2d 1700 (1945) (holding that “if the meaning of the words used is in doubt,” “a court must necessarily look to the BZA’s construction of the regulation,” and the BZA’s interpretation of its own regulation “becomes of controlling weight unless it is plainly erroneous or inconsistent with the regulation”) (emphasis supplied). *Chevron, U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 843, 104 S.Ct. 2778, 81 S.Ct. 694 (1984) (emphasis supplied); *see also Brown v. Bi-Lo*, 354 S.C. at 440, 581 S.E.2d at 838.

In this case, the BZA determined that the appellant is a property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA. The lower court opinion errs as a matter of law in overlooking this fact and respondents’ argument is based on an inapplicable statute which applies to folks who intervene after the BZA hearing.

The lower court order is reversible for failure to comply with the unambiguously expressed legislative intent pursuant to S.C. Code § 6-29-825, which provides that the requested mediation “must be granted.”

Moreover, the lower court order is reversible because it conflicts with the BZA’s own determination. The BZA held a de novo hearing on the merits. The Appellant timely filed notice of appeal pursuant to the statute. S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B). At the pre-litigation stage, it is reversible error for the lower court to summarily dismiss the case.

"A property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the board of appeals may appeal by filing a notice of appeal with the circuit court accompanied by a request for pre-litigation mediation in accordance with section 6-29-825." S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B). "If a property owner files a notice of appeal with a request for pre-litigation mediation, the request for mediation must be granted...." S.C. Code § 6-29-825. When interpretation of a statute is required, "words must be given their plain and ordinary meaning without resort to subtle or forced construction to limit or expand the statute's operation." *State v. Blackmon*, 304 S.C. 270, 273, 403 S.E.2d 660, 662 (1991).

Respondents misconstrued the *Newton* case. *Newton v. Zoning Bd. of Appeals for Beaufort Cnty.*, 396 S.C. 112, 719 S.E.2d 282 (S.C. App. 2011). The statute, S.C. Code § 6-29-820(B), is designed to encourage **pre-litigation**

mediation by **NOT** requiring the filing of a petition until and unless pre-litigation mediation is unsuccessful. In *Newton*, the Court made clear, “This procedure **does not allow for issue identification, or even party identification, prior to the filing of a petition** with the circuit court.” *Id.*, p. 284 (emphasis supplied). In this case, the lower court erred as a matter of law in summarily dismissing the case at the **pre-litigation** stage. Accordingly, the lower court order should be reversed. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

5. Public policy supports the request for mediation after BZA hearing on the merits involving violation of impervious surface limitations and storm water runoff adversely affecting the property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the BZA.

The purpose of the statute in promoting **pre-litigation** mediation should be supported. S.C. Code § 6-29-820. These are matters of public importance affecting Sullivans Island, Charleston County, and State and Federal regulations as well as

affecting precious coastal resources and water quality. Accordingly, the lower court should be reversed. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

6. The substantive rights of the Appellant have been prejudiced and the lower court order should be reversed.

The facts in this case establish the zoning administrator did not have the authority to alter or waive the zoning ordinances in question. The zoning code gives zoning administrators the power to administer and enforce the zoning code.

The zoning code does not grant power to an administrator to alter, modify, or waive provisions contained in the zoning code. Further, the zoning administrator was not authorized to grant a variance. The zoning code only grants the Zoning Board of Appeals the discretion of whether and when to grant a variance.

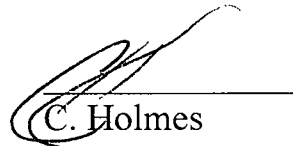
Moreover, the zoning administrator failed to uphold the Town's prior denial of the request to alter or waive pertinent zoning ordinances. That denial was supported by

petition signed by multiple owners of neighboring properties. The zoning administrator failed to provide statutory notice, deprived property owners of meaningful opportunity to be heard at a meaningful time, and exceeded his authority. The substantive rights of the Appellant have been prejudiced in violation of constitutional and statutory provisions; in excess of the statutory authority; in furtherance of unlawful procedure; by multiple other errors of law; by error based on the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the record as a whole; and/or by an abuse of discretion, clearly unwarranted exercise of discretion, or arbitrary or capricious actions. The zoning administrator's actions were in error and should be reversed. See *Moore v. Moore*, 376 S.C. 467, 657 S.E.2d 743 (2008) (procedural due process requires (1) adequate notice; (2) adequate opportunity for a hearing; (3) the right to introduce evidence; and (4) the right to confront and cross-examine witnesses). See S.C. Const. art. I, sec. 2, 3, 4, 10, and 14; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 4; S.C. Const. art. V, sec. 5; U.S. Const., Article I, sec. 9 and 10; U.S. Const. amend. I, IV, V, VII, and XIV. *Hicks v. Feiock*, 108 S.Ct. 1423, 485 U.S. 624, 99 L.Ed. 721, 56 U.S.L.W. 4347 (1988).

## CONCLUSION

In support of express legislative intent for mediation and for substantial justice affecting substantial rights, Appellant respectfully requests reversal of the lower court orders.

Respectfully submitted,



---

C. Holmes  
PO Box 187  
SI, SC 29482  
843.883.3010

June 25, 2015

Dr. Cynthia Holmes  
Post Office Box 187  
2061 Middle Street  
Sullivan's Island, SC 29482-0187

Dear Dr. Holmes:

I am in receipt of your two letters to Larry Dodds, Town Attorney for the Town of Sullivan's Island, indicating that you are requesting mediation with respect to the BZA appeal involving permit # 2014-2899. Our firm is currently handling an appeal to the Charleston County Circuit Court which is related to permit # 2014-2899. That appeal was filed by J. Doe and is Civil Action Number 2015-CP-10-0775. That being the case, Mr. Dodds asked that we respond to your letter concerning the same BZA decision.

The BZA held a hearing on the appeal of permit # 2014-2899 on April 10, 2014 and issued a Final Order on May 8, 2014 (mailed May 9, 2014). In response to your request, the BZA held a rehearing on September 11, 2014 and issued a Final Order on the rehearing on January 8, 2015 (mailed January 12, 2015).

Your request for mediation of this matter does not meet the requirements of the applicable South Carolina statute. Under South Carolina Code Section 6-29-820(B), the property owner whose land is the subject of a decision of the board of appeals may appeal a decision of the board of zoning appeal by filing, within thirty days of the mailing of the board of zoning appeals decision, a notice of appeal with the circuit court accompanied by a request for pre-litigation mediation in accordance with South Carolina code section 6-29-825.

Your letter requests do not comply with the above statute in several ways. For example, it is not timely, it is not filed with court as a notice of appeal accompanied by a request for mediation, and it does not appear to be requested by the owner of the property that was the subject of the BZA. According to the Charleston County records, James P. Walsh, not Dr. Cynthia Holmes, is the owner of the property that was the subject of the permit and BZA (1607 Poe Ave, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina). Therefore, because your requests are not proper under the applicable statute, the Town will not be providing tentative dates and mediators as you request in your letters to Mr. Dodds.

Very truly yours,



John P. Linton, Jr.

JPL/cam

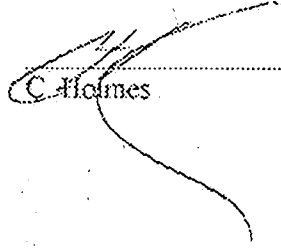
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
 )  
COUNTY OF CHARLESTON )

AFFIDAVIT

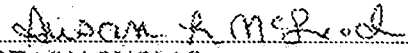
Personally came and appeared before me, Notary Public, C. Holmes, who upon being duly sworn did depose and say the following:

- 1) This affidavit is submitted in support of the attached Rule 59(e), SCRCF, Motion, and I am the plaintiff.
- 2) As owner of the land that is the subject of a decision of the board of appeals, I have statutory standing to appeal. S.C. Code § 6-29-820.
- 3) The attached copy of correspondence dated April 27, 2015, documents there was no required notice in Case No. 2015-CP-10-0775, *Doe v. BZA et al.* Moreover, it establishes that, on or before April 27, 2015, defendants knew or should have known they failed to provide the required notice to the other side. Defendants failed to timely disclose this material fact, thereby wrongfully inducing this Honorable Court to rely on their misrepresentations.
- 4) I received no required notice and no actual notice and was prejudiced thereby.
- 5) Defendants wrongfully induced this Honorable Court to rely on their misrepresentations and to sign ex parte order. On or before April 27, 2015, defendants failed to timely disclose the material fact that they failed their duty to provide required notice. Due in whole or in part to defendants' lack of diligence, ex parte order was signed. It has come to our attention that defendants made misrepresentations and/or material omissions to the Charleston County Clerk of Court as well.
- 6) It is fair to say that defendants would want notice. In what has become business as usual for defendants' counsel, they failed their professional responsibilities to this Honorable Court, to the Charleston County Clerk of Court, to their client, and to the other side. Defendants' motion should be dismissed/stricken.

FURTHER THE AFFIANT SAITH NOT.

  
C. Holmes

Subscribed and sworn to before me,  
Notary Public, this 30<sup>th</sup> day  
of June, 2015.

  
NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires: 02/26/17



April 27, 2015

PO Box 187

The enclosed mail was addressed to John Doe at the Post Office address. However, Pratt-Thomas, Walker, Attorneys At Law instructed me to place these letters into PO box 187.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the attorney's office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margie L. Seabrook".

Margie L. Seabrook

Postmaster

2061 Middle St.

Sullivan's Island, SC 29482



**Julie J. Armstrong**  
Charleston County Clerk of Court

Charleston County  
Circuit Court Case Details  
Public Index

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John Doe VS Board of Zoning Appeals , defendant, et al					
Case Number:	2015CP1000775	Court Agency:	Common Pleas	Filed Date:	02/09/2015
Case Type:	Common Pleas	Case Sub Type:	Zoning Board 970	File Type:	Non-Jury
Status:	Disposed	Assigned Judge:	Clerk Of Court C P, G S, And Family Court		
Disposition:	Ended by Non Jury	Disposition Date:	04/10/2015	Disposition Judge:	Dennis, R. Markley Jr.
Original Source Doc:		Original Case #:			
Judgment Number:		Court Roster:			

Case Parties   Judgments   Tax Map Information   Associated Cases   Actions   Financials								
Click the icon to show associated parties.								
Name	Address	Race	Sex	Year Of Birth	Party Type	Party Status	Last Updated	
Board of Zoning Appeals					Defendant		02/09/2015	
BZA					Defendant		02/10/2015	
Doe, John	PO Box 187 Sullivans Island SC 294820187				Plaintiff Pro Se		04/30/2015	
Doe, John					Plaintiff		04/14/2015	
Linton, John Phillips Jr.	PO Drawer 22247 Charleston SC 29413				Defendant Attorney		03/09/2015	
SI					Defendant		02/10/2015	
SI Building Dept					Defendant		02/10/2015	
SI Zoning Administrator					Defendant		02/10/2015	
Sullivans Island Town of					Defendant		03/09/2015	

FILED  
2015 MAR -9 PM 3:52  
JULIE J. ARMSTRONG  
CLERK OF COURT  
BY \_\_\_\_\_

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have served a true copy of the foregoing Notice of Motion and Motion to Dismiss by first class mail to the below-listed party on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015:

John Doe, pro-se  
2061 Middle Street  
Sullivans Island, SC 29482-0187

By: Chris Morrow  
Chris Morrow  
Paralegal to John P. Linton, Jr.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	
	)	COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
COUNTY OF CHARLESTON	)	
John Doe,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	Case No. 15-CP-10-0775
	)	
Board of Zoning Appeals,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

## TRANSCRIPT OF HEARING

The within Hearing in the above-captioned matter was held on April 7, 2015, before The Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr., in Courtroom 4B of the Charleston County Courthouse, 100 Broad Street, Charleston, South Carolina; attended by counsel as follows:

### APPEARANCES:

John P. Linton, Esq.

Treholm Walker, Esq.

**Deborah Garrison**  
*Circuit Court Reporter – 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit*  
 P O Box 901  
 Johns Island, South Carolina 29457  
[dgarrison@sccourts.org](mailto:dgarrison@sccourts.org)

John Doe v Board of Zoning Appeals

Case No. 15-CP-10-0775

Hearing of April 17, 2015

Before The Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr.

2

1 THE COURT: Doe versus Board of  
2 Zoning Appeals. Y'all are back? Is this  
3 Sullivans Island?

4 MR. LINTON: Yes, Your Honor.

5 THE COURT: Okay. Who is ----

6 MR. WALKER: Jane Doe d/b/a (sic)  
7 John Doe does not appear to be here.

8 THE COURT: Have they proceeded  
9 always as "Doe", "the Does"?

10 MR. LINTON: Yes, Your Honor. All  
11 they've filed is a Notice of Appeal as John  
12 Doe, and we've filed a Motion to dismiss that  
13 appeal.

14 THE COURT: Did they have an  
15 address where the Does live?

16 MR. LINTON: Yes.

17 THE COURT: Now we know the Does.  
18 They were sent notice of that, Miss Caroline?

19 CAROLINE LEONARD: Your Honor, notice  
20 was sent to 2061 Middle Street on Sullivans  
21 Island, South Carolina.

22 THE COURT: Is that the address  
23 that you have?

24 MR. LINTON: Your Honor, it is. I  
25 believe -- was the zip code on there? 29482-

1 187?

2 CAROLINE LEONARD: That's correct.

3 MR. LINTON: That's the same.

4 THE COURT: Very well.

5 MR. WALKER: And that is the  
6 subject property, too.

7 THE COURT: Okay. Then --

8 MR. LINTON: Your Honor, it is not  
9 the subject property. We believe that's the  
10 United States Post Office on Sullivans  
11 Island.

12 THE COURT: You briefed it?

13 MR. LINTON: Yes, Your Honor.

14 THE COURT: Your Motion is  
15 granted. Thank you, sir. If you (Mr.  
16 Linton) want to prepare an Order, I will be  
17 happy to sign it. A Motion to Dismiss is  
18 what you're asking for?

19 MR. LINTON: Yes, Your Honor.  
20 We've briefed it. We have not filed the  
21 brief but ---

22 THE COURT: File the brief. For  
23 the record, I am relying on your position  
24 stated in the brief -- and the fact that they  
25 are not here, but primarily the position



John Doe v Board of Zoning Appeals

Case No. 15-CP-10-0775

Hearing of April 17, 2015

Before The Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr.

1 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
2 ) CERTIFICATE  
3 COUNTY OF CHARLESTON )  
4

RECEIVED

APR 28 2016

SC Court of Appeals

6 I, the undersigned Deborah Garrison, Circuit  
7 Court Reporter for the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, hereby  
8 certify that the foregoing is a complete and  
9 accurate transcript of the hearing held in the  
10 within action heard on April 7, 2015, before The  
11 Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr.;

12 I further certify that I am neither kin nor  
13 counsel to any of the parties and have no interest  
14 in the outcome of this action.

  
Deborah Garrison

15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23 Charleston, South Carolina  
24 September 1, 2015

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In the Court of Appeals

RECEIVED

APR 28 2016

---

APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY  
Court of Common Pleas

SC Court of Appeals

The Honorable R. Markley Dennis, Jr., Circuit Court Judge

---

App. Case No. 2015-002297

---

John Doe,

Appellant,

v.

Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) and  
Town of Sullivans Island (S.I.),  
S. I. Zoning Administrator, and  
S. I. Building Dept., Individually  
and In Official Capacity,

Respondents.

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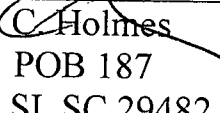
CERTIFICATE

---

RECEIVED  
APR 28 2016  
SC Court of Appeals

I certify that I have served a copy of the foregoing on the Respondents by depositing a copy in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, addressed to Respondents' counsel (843.727.2200) on this date at 16 Charlotte St., Chas., SC 29403. I certify the foregoing is the same as previously served with no substantive changes in compliance with Rule 211(b), SCACR. All parties required to be served have been served.

Dated 4/26/16

  
C. Holmes  
POB 187  
SI, SC 29482-0187  
843.883.3010