THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In the Supreme Court

APPEAL FROM LEXINGTON COUNTY

William P. Keesley, Circuit Court Judge

Appellate Case No. 2018-000978
Case No. 2012-CP-32-0342

Kay F. Paschal ..... Respondent

v.

Leon Lott, the Duly Elected Sheriff of
Richland County, South Carolina ..... Petitioner

BRIEF OF RESPONDENT

S. Jahue Moore, SC Bar #4063
John C. Bradley, Jr., SC Bar #7869
Stanley L. Myers, SC Bar #71110
MOORE TAYLOR LAW FIRM, PA
1700 Sunset Boulevard
West Columbia, SC 29169
803-796-9160
803-791-8410 (Fax)
jake@mttlaw.com
john@mttlaw.com
stanley@mttlaw.com
ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT KAY F. PASCHAL

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STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Respondent Kay F. Paschal commenced this action against Petitioner Leon Lott alleging causes of action against him for false arrest, malicious prosecution, abuse of process, negligence and civil conspiracy. (R. 16). Petitioner Lott answered the Complaint and asserted a counterclaim against Ms. Paschal for abuse of process. (R. 26). The parties subsequently engaged in written discovery as well as discovery depositions.

The case was tried before the Honorable William P. Keesley and a jury on July 21-25, 2014. At the close of the Respondent Paschal's case and again at the close of the evidence, Sheriff Lott moved for a directed verdict on various grounds. (R. 698). The Court granted Petitioner Lott's motion as to Respondent Paschal's false arrest cause of action. All remaining motions were denied. (R. 571 -756; 770).

At the close of the evidence, Respondent Paschal moved for a directed verdict as to the Petitioner's counterclaim. (R. 850 – 855). This motion was granted by the Court. (R. 855). Petitioner Lott renewed his directed verdict motions. (R. 860 – 869). The Court denied the Petitioner Lott's motions as to the causes of action for abuse of process and malicious prosecution. (R. 869). Respondent Paschal withdrew her cause of action for negligence. (R. 870).

The Respondent Paschal's causes of action for malicious prosecution and abuse of process claims were submitted to the jury. After deliberation, the jury returned a verdict in favor of Respondent Paschal on both claims and awarded her actual damages of 1.61 Million Dollars. (R. 14; 950).

Petitioner Lott subsequently filed three post-trial motions: a Motion to Reduce Verdict, or in the Alternative for a New Trial (New Trial *Nisi* Remittitur); Motion for

JNOV, or in the Alternative for a New Trial Absolute; and Motion for a New Trial Pursuant to the Thirteenth Juror Doctrine. (R. 41 - 75). On December 9, 2014, Judge Keesley, after hearing arguments of counsel, issued his Order reducing the Respondent Paschal's award to Three Hundred Thousand and No/100 ($300,000.00) Dollars. All of the Petitioner Lott's remaining motions were denied. (R. 1-11).

Respondent Paschal timely filed a Rule 59(c) Motion to Reconsider. (R. 75). On April 27, 2015, Judge Keesley issued his Order denying this motion. (R. 12). On June 10, 2015, after the Petitioner Lott filed his Notice of Appeal, the Respondent Paschal filed her Cross Appeal. (R. 1148; 1170).

On February 7, 2018, the South Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed the Lower Court's Order by the issuance of an unpublished memorandum opinion pursuant to Rule 220(b), SCAR. Petitioner Lott subsequently filed a Petition for Rehearing which was denied. Petitioner then filed a Petition for Certiorari with this Court which was granted.

STATEMENT OF THE FACTS

This is a very serious case which involves humiliation and abuse suffered by Respondent Kay Paschal ("Kay"), a longtime member of the South Carolina Bar. The abuse came at the hands of the Petitioner Leon Lott, Duly Elected Sheriff of Richland County, South Carolina ("Sheriff Lott"), operating at all times under color of State Law. Kay brought suit against Sheriff Lott alleging that he conspired to, and did intentionally, abuse her by wrongful law enforcement tactics used to intimidate and to effect/alter the outcome of a Richland County Probate Court proceeding. (R. 16). Kay's case was tried for approximately five (5) days before a Lexington County jury. The jury found for her on her causes of action for abuse of process and malicious prosecution. (R. 950). The jury awarded Kay 1.6 Million Dollars in actual damages. (R. 950).

Kay Paschal is an elderly member of the South Carolina Bar. (R. 467). Throughout her legal career, she worked representing indigent citizens of South Carolina. (R. 480). She also worked for the University of South Carolina. (R. 480–481). She operated her own law practice for a while. (R. 481).

Apart from her law practice, Kay otherwise lived a quiet life taking care of her family and her pets. (R. 480 – 481). In her later years, she developed a relationship with David Wallace ("David"). In 2001 or 2002 she did some legal work for him and for his company. (R. 494). In 2002, David hired Kay as his secretary. (R. 499 – 500). As David's secretary, Kay operated his office, paid his bills, kept his books and did his correspondence. (R. 494 -500; 511). She did not perform any legal work for him or his business once she went to work for him as his secretary. (R. 500).

Later, she and David developed a romantic relationship. At the time, Kay was living in a small house she owned in Lexington County. (R. 496 – 498). Kay moved in with David in 2003 at his house in Forest Acres, South Carolina. (R. 498, ll. 8-12). Kay and David lived there together until after his death in 2011 when she was evicted from their Forest Acres home by David's children. (R. 498).

Kay and David worked together in his yard creating a "showcase" home. (R. 511-512). They owned a number of pets together including cats and a pond full of Koi Fish. (R. 494 - 495). They took many vacations together. They maintained both separate and joint bank accounts. (R. 508).

Kay and David considered themselves to be husband and wife, although they never formally married. (R. 486). Kay wore a ring given to her by David. She adopted his last name as her own. (R. 467 - 468). Many of their mutual friends believed them to be husband and wife. (R. 613 – 614). The jury heard testimony that on the Friday prior to David's stroke, he and Kay applied for a marriage license. (R. 513 - 514).

In April of 2010, David went to Providence Hospital for insertion of a stent in his carotid artery. (R. 512 - 513). It was anticipated that this would be a same day surgery or, at most, that David would only be hospitalized overnight. (R.514). No problems were anticipated or expected. (R. 514). Unfortunately, shortly after the procedure, David suffered a debilitating stroke which left him paralyzed. (R. 515; 471 - 472). This complication resulted in a lengthy hospital stay, both at Providence Hospital and at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital. (R. 515 – 516).

Sometime prior to the Providence/HealthSouth hospitalizations, David executed a Power of Attorney ("POA") giving Kay his Power of Attorney. (R. 500; 954). The POA

was prepared in the office and given to David. He took the POA and had it executed outside of the presence of Kay and away from the office. (R. 501). Although Sheriff Lott makes much of the preparation and execution of the POA in his Brief, the jury heard ample testimony and evidence that Kay had absolutely no involvement in its execution by David. (R. 506). She testified that she did not know where he had it executed or any of the witnesses to the execution of the agreement. (R. 501).

David brought the executed POA back to the office and gave it to Kay who put it in a file. She did not file it with the Court. During David's hospital stay, she was instructed by David's medical care providers to file it. (R. 473 - 474). After filing the POA, Ms. Paschal signed David's name on checks as she had always done, even in front of David's two children. (R. 474; 506 - 507). The Wallace children were well aware of the Power of Attorney and during their father's lifetime raised no issue with Kay using it. To the contrary, the Wallace children never challenged Kay's use of the Power of Attorney to care for their father at any time during his lifetime. (R. 525).

David was discharged from the hospital with significant physical disabilities and limitations. As a result of the stroke he could not walk. (R. 471– 472). He could not feed himself. He had issues with bowel control. (R. 517). He was, however, able to understand and converse with others around him even though his speech was somewhat impaired. (R. 516). Individuals who spoke to him were able to understand him and carry on a conversation with him. (R. 444; 471 – 472). Contrary to information given to the Lexington Magistrate by Petitioner, David was never declared mentally incompetent in any way prior to his death. (R. 192 - 194). He was never declared to be a vulnerable elderly adult. (R. 193). No guardian was ever appointed for him during his lifetime. (R. 195).

After the stroke, Kay was David's primary caregiver. While he was hospitalized she remained at the hospital with him. (R. 528). Kay hired two caregivers to assist her with David's care during the day. (R. 517). At night, Kay was his primary caregiver. She drove him to his rehabilitation/physical therapy/doctor's visits. She took him on outings. She prepared his meals. (R. 518 - 519). She changed David's dressings and gave him his medications. (R. 528). She did all of the laundry. (R. 469 – 470). She purchased a queen sized hospital bed and slept with him at night in case he needed her. (R. 471).

She also oversaw modifications to the house which included replacing carpet with linoleum (to make it easier for him to get around in a wheelchair), constructing an indoor ramp, and contacting an architect to make the bathrooms more accessible. She purchased a refrigerator for protein drinks for David. (R. 469 - 470). Kay purchased a Hoyer lift to assist in getting David in and out of bed. (R. 469 – p. 471).

One of Kay's many responsibilities was to drive David to and from his rehabilitation/doctor's appointments. She also drove him to dinner and on outings. (R. 518). Because of his paralysis and size (compared to her own) she had difficulty getting him in and out of their vehicle in his wheelchair. (R. 518 –519). She went to Carolina Mobility and spoke with Tim Petersen, the general manager, about purchasing a handicap accessible van for David. (R. 434; 442). Mr. Petersen left the dealership with Kay and picked up David who was at a rehabilitation appointment. The three of them returned to Kay and David's residence. (R. 442 – 443). Mr. Petersen assisted Kay in getting David out of the van and into the house.

Mr. Peterson spoke with David and Kay regarding their choice of handicap accessible vans. David was present and participated in the decision as to which van they

preferred. Mr. Petersen was able to verbally communicate with David. (R. 443). He was able to understand what David was saying to him. (R. 443). David was able to communicate what he liked or disliked in a particular van. (R. 444). David and Kay decided to purchase a handicap accessible Toyota van. Kay consummated the transaction, which involved trading in a Cadillac, using her Power of Attorney. (R. 189; 436). She used David's money to pay for the van. (R. 520 – 521; 523; 966 - 968). David was aware of this transaction and aware of the fact that his money and the Cadillac were being used to purchase the van. (R. 523; 447). Kay testified that she would not have consummated the transaction if David had not wanted her to do so. (R. 523).

All of the proceeds from the Cadillac were applied to the price of the van. Contrary to the representations of Petitioner, Kay did not realize any of the proceeds from the sale of the car. (R. 479). Mr. Petersen, as was his customary practice, recommended that the van be titled as "Mr. Wallace or Ms. Paschal" to make transfer of the van easier for the "surviving party." (R. 435 - 436).

Kay used the van to transport David to his appointments and on outings. She only used the van without David to buy groceries. She did not use the van for any personal reasons or use. (R. 434).

On February 20, 2011, David died leaving an estate of approximately 6 Million Dollars. (R. 512). At the time of his death, David had two adult children, a son, Jeffrey Wallace, and a daughter, Elizabeth Wallace. (R. 189). The jury heard testimony that Elizabeth is a lawyer and Jeffrey at one time worked for the CIA. During David's lifetime, the children's contact with him was limited. The jury heard testimony that the children rarely visited David. The jury heard testimony that they did not participate in David's care,

instead leaving it to Kay. (R. 519). However, after his death they immediately instituted criminal proceedings against Kay alleging abuse and neglect. (R. 161). They also initiated proceedings against Kay in the Richland County Probate Court, for the first time challenging the POA and Kay's use of it to care for their father. (R. 528).

Petitioner Leon Lott is the duly elected Sheriff of Richland County. He hired a deputy named Heidi Scott (now Heidi Scott Jackson) ("Lt. Jackson"). All of Lt. Jackson's actions were carried out in her capacity as a deputy for the Richland County Sheriff's Department. (R. 96 - 98). The jury heard evidence that Lt. Jackson was never properly deputized. South Carolina Code Section 23-27-70 requires each deputy sheriff to post a surety bond prior to functioning as a deputy. South Carolina Code Section 23-11-30 also requires a bond on the part of the Sheriff. Neither Sheriff Lott nor Lt. Jackson had any such surety bond.

The Wallace children's criminal complaint against Kay ultimately found its way to Lt. Jackson. The jury heard evidence that Lt. Jackson had very little training as a law enforcement officer. She did have training and experience as a victim's advocate. (R. 107). Lt. Jackson was assigned to the Wallace case. She became very close to the Wallace children during the investigation. By her own admission, she worked closely with them. (R. 147 – 151). As set forth below, the jury heard ample evidence that Lt. Jackson did everything in her power to provide the Wallace children an advantage in the Probate Court proceedings.

Lt. Jackson's first interaction with Kay occurred on March 8, 2011, less than three weeks after David's death. At that time, Kay was at the home she shared with David with his children explaining computer passwords and the property owned by David at the time

of his death. (R. 529 – 531). Lt. Jackson showed up with Richland County Sheriff's Department officers and a search warrant. This was a complete surprise to Kay, but not to the Wallace children. (R. 542). The Wallace children appeared to Kay be very friendly with Lt. Jackson and the deputies. There appeared to Kay to be a "special relationship" between the Wallace children, Lt. Jackson and the Richland deputies. (R. 542). The jury heard evidence that the Wallace children appeared to not only assist Lt. Jackson with her search, but to direct it. (R. 531 – 532). On at least one occasion during the search, the children personally found items and handed them to Lt. Jackson. (R. 545).

In addition, during the search, Lt. Jackson and her cohorts took computers, printers, cameras and photo cards. Many of the pictures seized during the search were pictures of Kay and David's pets and pictures that Kay had taken during her vacation trips with David. These belongings had great sentimental value to Kay. (R. 530; 545). None of these seized items have ever been returned to her. (R. 545).

As set forth above, Lt. Jackson was a Richland County deputy. She had absolutely no authority at all in Lexington County. (R. 101 - 102). Lt. Jackson testified that she is aware that she had no jurisdiction in Lexington County. (R. 101 – 103). She was never asked by anyone in Lexington County to participate in any ongoing Lexington County investigation. (R. 103).

Notwithstanding this fact, Lt. Jackson arranged for a second search of Kay's former residence on Kitty Hawk Drive in Lexington County on May 8, 2011. (R. 117 – 120; 969). The search warrants are directed to "any bonded law enforcement officer of the aforementioned county." (R. 119; 969). As set forth above, Lt. Jackson was not a bonded law enforcement officer and she was not an officer of Lexington County. (R. 120; 139).

Despite this obvious deficiency, Lt. Jackson conducted the search and seized Kay's property located in Lexington County anyway.

This search occurred immediately after Kay had been evicted from the Forest Acres home in the Probate Court proceeding initiated by the Wallace children. (R. 548 – 549). Kay was in the process of trying to convert her former Lexington County residence, which had been used for storage during the years she lived with David, back into a habitable residence when Lt. Jackson and Richland County Sheriff's Department officers arrived at her house. Like the first search, this second search was done on the authority and direction of Lt. Jackson and carried out solely by Richland County Sheriff's Department officers. (R. 118-119; 138; 555). Like the first search, the Wallace children, Kay's adversaries in the Probate Court proceeding, were present when this search occurred. (R. 549). Once again this search (which was very surprising to Kay) did not appear to be a surprise to the Wallace children. (R. 549). Once again they participated in the search and assisted Lt. Jackson and her cohorts in it. (R. 550 – 551). Kay testified that during the search Lt. Jackson laughed and joked with Elizabeth Wallace. (R. 551 – 553).

As she had done during the earlier search in Richland County, Lt. Jackson took computers and cameras containing items of great sentimental value to Kay including family photographs, not just of David, but also of her own family. The items seized from Kay's Lexington County home were taken to the Richland County evidence room by Lt. Jackson. (R. 173). None of these items were ever returned to Kay. (R. 555 – 556, l. 23). Kay has never received any explanation from the Sheriff's Department as to why they will not return what has been seized. These items have been in the possession of the Sheriff's Department for years with no explanation or excuse. (R. 578).

The jury heard evidence that these searches were done close to Probate Court hearings. The jury heard ample evidence so that it could have concluded that the two searches were done in a way which deprived Plaintiff of relevant evidence to present to the Probate Court. (R. 545 - 547). The jury heard testimony regarding the impact of the illegal search and seizure and the fact that it (along with the Richland County search) resulted in the Plaintiff being unable to properly present evidence to the Probate Court. (R. 546 – 547). Kay did not have access to her evidence and she did not have access to her records.

Lt. Jackson's improper involvement in this case did not end with the illegal search. On November 16, 2011, a hearing to remove Kay as the administrator and trustee of David Wallace's estate was scheduled in the Richland County Probate Court. (R. 559; 968). After the illegal search and seizure, Lt. Jackson, with the knowledge, permission and ratification of Sheriff Lott, participated in the preparation of two arrest warrants in Lexington County for Kay's arrest. (R. 104 – 105). The charges had previously been investigated in Lexington County by Lexington County authorities. (R. 203). Steve Baumgartner, an 18 year employee of the Lexington County Sherriff's Department, thoroughly investigated the matter involving the use of the POA to purchase the handicap accessible van and determined that there was no probable cause to charge Kay with any wrongdoing or to arrest her. (R. 206 - 207; 218 – 221; 360 - 361, l. 10; 365; 979). Despite this finding by the investigating authorities in Lexington County Law Enforcement, Lt. Jackson continued her crusade against Kay.

The two warrants were sworn to by Lt. Jackson. (R. 977-978; 104). Lt. Jackson personally travelled to Lexington County to obtain these warrants. The jury heard testimony that this was the first time she had ever done this in her career. (R. 227 – 228).

They were issued solely on information supplied to the issuing Judge (Judge Whittle) by Lt. Jackson. (R. 105). The jury heard evidence that Lt. Jackson did not know the meaning of foundational words that she used in the affidavit to obtain the arrest warrant. (R. 1; 225). The jury heard testimony that Lt. Jackson did not have any evidence that Kay intentionally or willfully used a fraudulent POA. (R. 240 – 241). The jury heard testimony from which it could have inferred that Lt. Jackson was less than candid or truthful in swearing out the warrants before Judge Whittle. These warrants resulted in Kay turning herself in and being arrested. There was no proof Kay did anything wrong and the jury heard testimony that Lt. Jackson withheld information from the Lexington County Magistrate when she got the warrants. (R. 1). She did not tell the Lexington County Magistrate that Lexington County had already investigated these charges and found no probable cause. (R. 1). In securing the warrants, Lt. Jackson did not tell the Magistrate that she had spoken with Dayton Riddle, a solicitor in Lexington County, who had raised concerns about Lt. Jackson swearing out a warrant in Lexington County. (R. 1).

As a result of the arrest warrants, Lt. Jackson called Kay on November 15th, the day before a scheduled Probate Court hearing, and informed her of the outstanding warrants and that she needed to go to the Lexington County jail the next morning at 5:30 AM. (R. 559 – 561; 975). Kay went to the jail at the direction of Lt. Jackson at 5:30 AM on the following day (November 16th) and was arrested. As a result of her arrest and incarceration, she was not able to attend the Probate Court hearing. (R. 561). The matter was heard in Probate Court in Kay's absence. (R. 564).

The jury heard ample evidence of the degradation that Kay, a member of the South Carolina Bar and an officer of the South Carolina Courts, experienced during her 40 hours

in the Lexington County Jail. (R. 564). Kay was booked, photographed and fingerprinted. (R. 562 – 563). Her bond was set for $50,000, in part due to testimony from Elizabeth Wallace. (R. 564). Kay did not have the money to post bail. (R. 564). She was initially given a jumpsuit to wear, but due to the fact it needed to be washed, she had to turn it in after the bond hearing and was given a sheet to wear. (R. 563). She was forced to spend the night in jail with only a sheet (no bra or panties), sleeping on a mat on the floor with other prisoners. (R. 565 – 567). The jury heard ample evidence of the fear, anxiety, humiliation and shock that this caused Kay. (R. 565 – 567).

A bond modification hearing was held on November 17, 2011, before the Honorable Knox McMahon, Presiding Judge of Lexington County. (R. 569 – 571; 974). To get to the hearing, Kay had to walk through the Courthouse in a prison jumpsuit. She suffered the humiliation of seeing faces she had worked with during her long years as a practicing attorney in Lexington County. The jury heard testimony that neither Lt. Jackson nor any of the Wallace children were present at the bond modification hearing. Judge McMahon's Order granting Kay's motion to modify her bond expressed concerns about the fact that Kay had been arrested in Lexington County on arrest warrants signed by a Richland County Deputy "apparently functioning in Lexington County." His Order raised questions as to the legality of the warrants. (R. 570). Judge McMahon ordered Kay's release on a $1,000.00 personal recognizance bond on each count. (R. 570; 974).

The charges brought against Kay by Lt. Jackson were ultimately dismissed for lack of probable cause in January of 2012. (R. 175; 571; 576). Based on the lack of evidence and the lack of jurisdiction, the Honorable Gary Morgan, Magistrate for Lexington County, dismissed the criminal warrants in Lexington County. (R. 115; 381; 383).

Sadly, the dismissal of the Lexington County charges for lack of probable cause did not bring this matter to an end. In December 2013, after Kay commenced this action, two additional warrants for "forgery, no dollar amount" were sworn out by the Richland County Sheriff's Department. (R. 176 – 177; 579 – 581; 1016-1017). Howard Hughes, an employee of the Sherriff's Department, prepared these affidavits "upon information and belief." (R. 1016-1017). There are no factual averments in the compliant, nor is there any indication that Mr. Howard Hughes had any firsthand knowledge of any of the claimed allegations against Kay. Kay has never been given any information as to what these charges are or what they involve. Her efforts to get a preliminary hearing as to these charges have been unsuccessful. (R. 581). These cases have languished for over two years.

As a result of the arrest warrants sworn out by Lt. Jackson, Kay had to report her arrest to the South Carolina Supreme Court. Her license to practice law was suspended and has remained suspended since that date. (R. 475; 479; 987). The jury heard evidence of the damages suffered by Kay as a result of her arrest including embarrassment, humiliation, and loss of income. (R. 1).

STANDARD OF REVIEW

In ruling on motions for a directed verdict or JNOV, the trial court is required to view the evidence and the inferences that reasonably can be drawn therefrom in the light most favorable to the party opposing the motions. *Steinke v. S.C. Dep't of Labor, Licensing & Reg.*, 336 S.C. 373, 386, 520 S.E.2d 142, 148 (1999). "In deciding whether to grant or deny a directed verdict motion, the trial court is concerned only with the existence or nonexistence of evidence." *Pond Place Partners, Inc. v. Poole,* 351 S.C. 1, 15, 567 S.E.2d 881, 888 (Ct.App.2002) (quoting *Sims v. Giles,* 343 S.C. 708, 714, 541 S.E.2d 857, 861 (Ct. App. 2001)). "When considering directed verdict and JNOV motions, neither the trial court nor the appellate court has authority to decide credibility issues or to resolve conflicts in the testimony or evidence." *Id.* The Appellate Court will reverse the trial court's ruling on a directed verdict or JNOV motion only where there is no evidence to support the ruling or where the ruling is controlled by an error of law. *Clark v. S.C. Dep't of Public Safety,* 362 S.C. 377, 382–83, 608 S.E.2d 573, 576 (2005); *Hinkle v. Nat'l Cas. Ins. Co.,* 354 S.C. 92, 96, 579 S.E.2d 616, 618 (2003).

ARGUMENT

I. THE COURT OF APPEALS PROPERLY INTERPRETED AND APPLIED SOUTH CAROLINA CODE SECTION 22-5-110 TO THE FACTS OF THIS CASE.

As he has done throughout this Appeal, Petitioner Lott first takes issue with the Trial Court's use of South Carolina Code Section 22-5-110 to evaluate the actions of Lt. Jackson with respect to her appearance before the Lexington Magistrate, Judge Whittle, and the arrest warrants that she obtained in Lexington County. Petitioner Lott again asserts that the Trial Court's interpretation, application and use of this statute at trial resulted in denial of Petitioner Lott's directed verdict motions, as well as his post-trial JNOV Motions. Petitioner Lott finally asserts that this resulted in the jury returning an "incorrect, unjust and unfair trial." Petitioner further asserts that this argument was ignored and overlooked by the Court of Appeals in its opinion and denial of his efforts to obtain a rehearing. These assertions lacks merit.

Although this Statute came up on multiple occasions during the Trial, it was not, contrary to the arguments of Petitioner Lott, "the centerpiece or focus of her (Respondent's) case." (Petitioner's Brief, Page 15). Rather, reference to this statute was only one instance or example of Lt. Jackson's improper conduct and activities in Lexington County and interaction with the Lexington County Magistrate that were presented to the jury. Further, as the Court of Appeals determined, the Court's use of 22-5-110 by the Trial Court was proper and did not constitute an error of law. As correctly recognized by the Trial Court, the Appellant/Respondent's conduct with respect to this statute was only one example of the "...overzealous, ill-willed, and improper prosecution...conducted by the Defendant (Appellant/Respondent) with respect to the Lexington County charges." (R. 6).

In evaluating and ultimately denying the Respondent's Post-Trial Motions, Judge Keesley recognized that "...whether the court applied the law properly...has been the cause of some angst in evaluating the post-trial motions." (R. 7). Judge Keesley recognized that, "some of this relates to the proper interpretation of S.C. Code Ann. 22-5-110 and its applicability to the actions of the Defendant's Deputy." (R. 7). The Court rejected Petitioner Lott's argument that this statute had no applicability to the actions of Lt. Jackson, concluding:

> Viewing the totality of the circumstances, the court finds that sufficient evidence was presented to enable the jury to determine that the conduct of the Defendant (Respondent) in pursuing and obtaining the arrest warrant that is the subject of this action was contrary to the procedure provided in S.C. Code Ann 22-5-110, that the Defendant (Respondent) was put on notice by the 11th Circuit Solicitor's office of the applicability of that statute, that there was mention to the Richland County Lieutenant about Magistrates having to issue a courtesy summons in some situations, that the Richland County failed to alert the Magistrate about the information she obtained related to a courtesy summons, and that she withheld from the Magistrate the fact that the Lexington County Sheriff's Office investigation did not conclude that charges were warranted.

The Trial Court's analysis and conclusions were correct and supported by the evidence presented at Trial. The jury heard ample evidence of Lt. Jackson's participation in the preparation and procurement of two arrest warrants in Lexington County for Kay's arrest. (R. 104 – 105). These were done in the course and scope of her employment by the Richland County Sheriff's Department. These charges had previously been investigated in Lexington County by Lexington County authorities. (R. 203). Steve Baumgartner, an 18 year employee of the Lexington County Sherriff's Department, had thoroughly investigated the matter involving the use of the POA to purchase the handicap accessible van and determined that there was no probable cause to charge Kay with any wrongdoing or to arrest her. (R. 206 – 207; 218– 221; 360 – 361; 365; 979).

The two warrants were sworn to by Lt. Jackson. (R. 104; 978-979). They were issued solely on information supplied to the issuing Judge (Judge Whittle) by Lt. Jackson. (R. 105). The jury heard evidence that Lt. Jackson did not know the meaning of foundational words that she used in the affidavit to obtain the arrest warrant. (R. 1). These warrants resulted in Kay turning herself in and being arrested. There was no proof Kay did anything wrong and the jury heard testimony that Lt. Jackson withheld information from the Lexington County Magistrate when she got the warrant. (R. 1). She did not tell the Lexington County Magistrate that Lexington County had already investigated these charges and found no probable cause. (R. 1). In securing the warrants, Lt. Jackson did tell the Magistrate that she had spoken with Dayton Riddle, the assistant solicitor in Lexington County who had raised concerns about Lt. Jackson swearing out a warrant in Lexington County. (R. 1; 267 – 268; 831 - 832). As correctly recognized by Judge Keesley in his Order, Solicitor Riddle pointed out the statute and its possible application to Lt. Jackson obtaining warrants to arrest Kay. However, at no time did Lt. Jackson convey these concerns to the Magistrate in her haste to obtain arrest warrants against Kay. (R. 267).

The Petitioner argues that the Trial Court's alleged misinterpretation and misapplication of this code section resulted in the denial of a directed verdict and JNOV motions and also caused Sheriff Lott to receive an unfair trial. This argument is not supported by the facts that were presented to the jury. As set forth by Judge Keesley on numerous occasions during Trial and in his Order, the jury heard ample evidence to support Respondent/Appellant's causes of action. (R. 1). As determined by the Court of Appeals in its decision, and set forth above, there was ample evidence to submit this issue to the jury. The Court's handling of this statute at trial did not amount to an abuse of discretion.

There is simply nothing to support the Appellant/Respondent's assertions that the Trial Court's handling of this statute resulted in either the denial of Petitioner Lott's directed verdict or JNOV motions or resulted in an unfair trial.

The Trial Court properly interpreted South Carolina Code Section 22-5-110 and correctly submitted the issue of Petitioner's compliance with South Carolina Code Section 22-5-110 to the jury. The Court of Appeals in its opinion correctly affirmed the Trial Court's handling of this issue. The decision of the South Carolina Court of Appeals as to this issue is correct and should be affirmed by this Court.

II. THE COURT OF APPEALS PROPERLY AFFIRMED THE TRIAL COURT'S DENIAL OF SHERIFF LOTT'S DIRECTED VERDICT AND POST TRIAL MOTIONS WITH RESPECT TO RESPONDENT'S CAUSE OF ACTION FOR MALACIOUS PROSECUTION

Petitioner Lott argues that the Trial Court erred in denying his Motions for Directed Verdict/JNOV with respect to Respondent Paschal's cause of action for malicious prosecution. Petitioner again argues that the Respondent failed to establish termination of the underlying proceedings in her favor and that the Lower Court erred in failing to grant his directed verdict or JNOV motions. Petitioner further argues that the Court of Appeals erred in affirming the Trial Court's determination.

To recover in a malicious prosecution action, a plaintiff must prove the following: (1) the institution or continuation of original judicial proceedings; (2) by or at the instance of the defendant; (3) termination of such proceedings in the plaintiffs favor; (4) malice in instituting such proceedings; (5) lack of probable cause; and (6) resulting injury or damage. *Broyhill v. Resolution Mgmt. Consultants, Inc.*, 401 S.C. 466, 736 S.E.2d 867, 870–71 (Ct.App.2012). Petitioner Lott asserts that there was ample evidence in this case to support her claim for Malicious Prosecution. (R. 1).

As he has done throughout his Appeal, Petitioner Sheriff Lott focuses his argument by alleging that Respondent Paschal failed to prove two essential elements of her malicious prosecution cause of action, probable cause and termination of the underlying proceedings in her favor. See, *Broyhill v. Resolution Management Consultants, Inc.*, 401 S.C. 466, 736 S.E.2d 867 (Ct. App. 2012).

Contrary to the assertions and arguments of Petitioner Lott, the jury heard ample evidence as to both of these elements and the Trial Court correctly denied Petitioner Lott's directed verdict and post-trial motions with respect to this cause of action.

The jury heard ample evidence from which it could have concluded that facts within the knowledge of Lt. Jackson would have lead a reasonable person to believe the individual arrested was not guilty of a crime. *Jackson v. City of Abbeville*, 366 S.C. 662, 623 S.E.2d. 656 (Ct. App. 2005). The jury heard conflicting testimony as to Lt. Jackson's investigation, or lack thereof prior to obtaining her arrest warrants. The jury heard conflicting testimony regarding Lt. Jackson's contact with Tim Peterson, the employee with Carolina Mobility who handled the sale of the van. The jury heard evidence as to her "version" of sale of the van. The jury also heard testimony and evidence regarding the Lexington County Sheriff's Department's own investigation of the same transaction. The jury heard testimony that these same charges had previously been investigated in Lexington County by Lexington County authorities. (R. 203). Steve Baumgartner, an 18 year employee of the Lexington County Sherriff's Department, had thoroughly investigated the matter involving the use of the POA to purchase the handicap accessible van and determined that there was no probable cause to charge Kay with any wrongdoing or to arrest her. (R. 206; 218 – 221; 360 – 361; 365; 979).

As he did in his post-trial motions, Petitioner Lott relies upon Lt. Jackson's conversations with various law enforcement personnel as justification of her actions with respect to the arrest warrants. However, as brought out by Ms. Paschal's counsel in his cross examination of these witnesses, these contacts were fatally flawed in that Lt. Jackson did not present any of these individuals with a full set of facts prior to eliciting their opinions and were therefore designed to bolster her own flawed prosecution of the case, as opposed to obtaining objective opinions regarding the status of her investigation. (R. 260 – 261). The Trial Court properly considered this argument and rejected it, recognizing, "there is a dispute as to whether there was a full and complete disclosure of all the material facts, and whether Defendant acted and relied upon such advice in good faith before seeking the arrest warrants in Lexington County." (R. 1).

Unlike the *Jackson* case, relied upon by Appellant/Respondent Lott, the facts of this case with respect to probable cause certainly do not yield "but one conclusion" making this issue a question of law and not fact. Whether probable cause exists is ordinarily a jury question, but it may be decided as a matter of law when the evidence yields only one conclusion. *Law v. South Carolina Department of Corrections,* 368 S.C. at 436, 629 S.E.2d 642 (2006) (citing *Parrott v. Plowden Motor Co.,* 246 S.C. 318, 323, 143 S.E.2d 607, 609 (1965)). This is certainly not an instance where the evidence presented regarding probable cause yields only one conclusion. The Trial Court properly submitted the question of probable cause to the jury and did not err in denying Appellant/Respondent Lott's post-trial motions with respect to this issue.

Petitioner Lott next argues that Kay failed to present evidence from which a jury could have determined that the judicial proceedings (in this case the arrest warrants and

subsequent criminal charges) terminated in her favor. See, *McKenney v. Jack Eckerd Company*, 304 S.C. 21, 402 S.E.2d 887 (1991). However, as recognized by Judge Keesley, there was ample evidence presented for the jury to conclude that the proceedings terminated in Kay's favor. The jury heard ample evidence that the charges brought against Kay by Lt. Jackson were ultimately dismissed for lack of probable cause in January of 2012. (R. 175; 576; 579; 835 - 836). Based on the lack of evidence and the lack of jurisdiction, the Honorable Gary Morgan, Magistrate for Lexington County, dismissed the criminal warrants in Lexington County. (R. 115; 381; 383).

In denying Appellant/Respondent Lott's post-trial motions, the Lower Court disagreed with Sheriff Lott's argument "...that there is a lack of evidence that the Richland County Sheriff's Department acted with malice in instituting or continuing the proceedings, and a lack of evidence about the Defendant instituting or continuing an action that lacked probable cause." (R. 1). To the contrary, the Court concluded that, ".....there is sufficient evidence to allow the jury to draw those conclusions." (R. 1). The Lower Court's Order is supported by the evidence presented to the jury in this case and was properly affirmed by the Court of Appeals in its opinion. The decision of the Court of Appeals should be affirmed by this Court.

III. THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT RESPONDENT'S ABUSE OF PROCESS CLAIM

Finally, Petitioner Lott argues that the Court of Appeals erred in overturning the Trial Court's denial of his directed verdict and post-trial motions relating to Kay's abuse of process claim. The Respondent Paschal submits that the Trial Court's Order denying the Petitioner's directed verdict and JNOV motions were proper and that the South Carolina

Court of Appeals correctly affirmed the Lower Court's rulings in this case with respect to abuse of process.

The tort of abuse of process is intended to compensate a party for harm resulting from another party's misuse of the legal system. *Food Lion, Inc. v. United Food & Commercial Workers Int'l Union,* 351 S.C. 65, 74 n. 5, 567 S.E.2d 251, 255 n. 5 (Ct. App. 2002). To cause process to issue without justification is an essential element of malicious prosecution, but not of abuse of process. With respect to the cause of action for abuse of process, the issuance of the process may be justified in itself; it is the malicious misuse or perversion of the process for an end not lawfully warranted by it that constitutes the tort known as abuse of process. *Huggins v. Winn-Dixie Greenville, Inc.,* 249 S.C. 206, 153 S.E.2d 693 (1967).

As recognized by the Trial Court, the jury heard ample evidence from which it could have concluded that Lt. Jackson completely perverted the legal process in this case, resulting in humiliation, embarrassment and damages to Kay. The jury heard evidence that the Petitioner's officers, particularly Lt. Jackson, single-mindedly and doggedly pursued its investigation oblivious to the actual facts of this case. The jury heard ample testimony that this was done, in part, to assist the Wallace children in pursuing a vendetta (both in and out of Probate Court) against Respondent Paschal. As the jury correctly determined, the Defendant knew very well the potential consequences of her actions and proceeded without just cause despite the consequences. The Trial Court correctly determined and ruled that the jury heard ample testimony on which it could have returned a verdict for abuse of process under South Carolina Law. The Trial Court's Order was correctly affirmed by the South Carolina of Appeals and should be affirmed by this Court.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth, the Trial Court correctly denied Appellant/Respondent Sheriff Lott's directed verdict motions and post-trial motions with respect to South Carolina Code Section 22-5-110, Malicious Prosecution and Abuse of Process. (R. 1). The decision of the South Carolina Court of Appeals, affirming the Lower Court's rulings was correct. Respondent respectfully submits that the decision of the South Carolina Court of Appeals in Opinion 2018-UP-080 be affirmed by this Court.

Respectfully Submitted,

MOORE TAYLOR LAW FIRM, PA

By: _____

S. Jahue Moore, SC Bar #4063
John C. Bradley, Jr., SC Bar #7869
Stanley L. Myers, SC Bar #71110
1700 Sunset Boulevard
West Columbia, SC 29169
803-796-9160
803-791-8410 (Fax)
jake@mttlaw.com
john@mttlaw.com
stanley@mttlaw.com
ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT
KAY F. PASCHAL

September 9, 2019

West Columbia, South Carolina

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In the Supreme Court

APPEAL FROM LEXINGTON COUNTY
Common Pleas Court

William P. Keesley, Circuit Court Judge

Appellate Case No. 2018-000978
Civil Action No. 2012-CP-32-0342

Kay F. Paschal .....Respondent,

v.

Leon Lott, the Duly Elected Sheriff of
Richland County, South Carolina .....Appellant.

PROOF OF SERVICE

I, Lynn G. Ivey, an employee of the Moore Taylor Law Firm, P.A., certify that I have served the Brief of Respondent, by United States mail, in an envelope with sufficient postage affixed thereto, upon all counsel of record on September 9, 2019.

Andrew W. Lindemann, Esquire
Lindemann, Davis & Hughes, PA
P.O. Box 6923
Columbia, SC 29260

Patrick J. Frawley, Esquire
Davis Frawley, LLC
P. O. Box 489
Lexington, SC 29071-0489

Lynn G. Ivey

West Columbia, South Carolina

September 9, 2019