

FILED
APR 10 2023
A.C.J.C.

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
JUDICIAL CONDUCT

DOCKET NO: ACJC 2023-051

IN THE MATTER OF

R. DOUGLAS HOFFMAN,
JUDGE OF THE MUNICIPAL COURT

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FORMAL COMPLAINT

Maureen G. Bauman, Disciplinary Counsel, Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct (“Complainant”), complaining of R. Douglas Hoffman, J.M.C. (“Respondent”), says:

1. Respondent is a member of the Bar of the State of New Jersey, having been admitted to the practice of law in 1972.
2. At all times relevant to this matter, Respondent served as a part-time judge in the Municipal Court of the Township of Robbinsville, a position to which he was first appointed on February 25, 2010, reappointed on February 24, 2013, February 23, 2016, February 22, 2019, and February 20, 2022, and continues to hold. Respondent also served as a part-time judge in New Hanover Township/Wrightstown Borough shared municipal court and Mansfield

Township/Springfield Township/Southampton Township shared municipal court, positions to which he was first appointed on January 1, 2022, and continues to hold.

3. Beginning in April 2021, L.W.¹ began working as a violations clerk in the Robbinsville Township Municipal Court.

4. Respondent and L.W. were affiliated as “friends” on Facebook. Respondent often “liked” L.W.’s posts, exchanged jokes, comments, and photos, some with sexual innuendo, and discussed weekend plans with L.W. on Facebook.

5. Respondent extended an open invitation to L.W. to visit him at his beach house any time she was in the area.

6. On May 31, 2022, Respondent provided L.W. with his personal cell phone number via direct message to her Facebook account. Prior to that date, Respondent communicated with L.W. via Facebook Messenger.

7. Between June 2, 2022 and October 13, 2022, Respondent engaged in eight separate text conversations with L.W.

8. On October 10, 2022, in response to a text message from L.W., Respondent provided L.W. with the address of his beach house.

9. Beginning at 9:27 a.m. on Saturday, October 15, 2022, Respondent and L.W. communicated by text as follows:

L.W.: What are you doing today?

¹ The alleged victim will be referred to by her initials to maintain her privacy.

RESPONDENT: Now sitting on porch drinking coffee . . . later loading up a trailer with junk and drinking. . . U?

L.W.: I'm just hanging out waiting for the Phillies game it's on at 2. . . I was at the game yesterday! It was awesome they won 9-1! I wanted to come stop by if that's okay

RESPONDENT: Absolutely. . . anytime

L.W.: Cool!

10. L.W. arrived at Respondent's beach house at or around 11:30 a.m. where she remained for longer than four hours.

11. Respondent and L.W. spoke initially on the front porch of Respondent's house before Respondent invited L.W. inside for a tour.

12. Over the next four hours, L.W. and Respondent each consumed four shots of whiskey and one to two cans of beer.

13. At one point, Respondent and L.W. sat within arm's length of each other on a couch in Respondent's family room drinking alcohol and watching a baseball game on L.W.'s phone.

14. The conversation between Respondent and L.W. at times concerned L.W.'s intimate relationship with her boyfriend.

15. While seated on the couch, Respondent touched L.W.'s knee and upper thigh, without her consent, and in a manner that made L.W. uncomfortable.

16. Immediately thereafter, L.W. abruptly left Respondent's house without further discussion and without her car keys.

17. L.W. telephoned her mother for a ride home and recounted for her mother what had occurred in Respondent's home and specifically his unwanted touching of her knee and upper thigh.

18. L.W., immediately thereafter, telephoned her supervisor at the Robbinsville Township Municipal Court and reported what had occurred with Respondent.

19. Respondent, approximately 90 minutes after L.W. left his home, texted L.W. the following message, "U ok" to which L.W. did not respond.

20. On Monday, October 17, 2022, L.W. met with the court administrator, a representative from Human Resources, and the business administrator to report Respondent's actions.

21. Respondent, in providing alcohol to and drinking alcohol with L.W., a subordinate employee, over several hours, while that employee was a guest in his home, and in touching L.W. without her consent, violated Canon 1, Rule 1.1, and Canon 2, Rule 2.1 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

22. By the same conduct, Respondent demeaned the judicial office in violation of Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), of the Code of Judicial Conduct.


WHEREFORE, Complainant charges that Respondent, Municipal Court Judge R. Douglas Hoffman, has violated the following canons of the Code of Judicial Conduct:

Canon 1, Rule 1.1, which requires judges to observe high standards of conduct to preserve the integrity and independence of the Judiciary;

Canon 2, Rule 2.1, which requires judges to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety and to act, at all times, in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the Judiciary; and

Canon 5, Rule 5.1(A), which requires judges to conduct their extrajudicial activities in a manner that would not demean the judicial office.

DATED: April 10, 2023



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