

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE
CASE NO. C25-0104

In the matter of:)
)
Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley)
Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation)
and Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins,)
Respondents)

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND FINAL AGENCY DECISION

In accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 150B-40(d), the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service (the “Board”) issues the following Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Final Agency Decision in this matter.

The record reflects that a quorum of the Board was present at the hearing held on March 11, 2026, and at the time the Board made this decision on March 11, 2026. The record further reflects that Board member Michael Allen did not participate in the hearing or deliberations of this case because he served on the Board's Disciplinary Committee at the time this particular matter was reviewed. At the hearing, Catherine E. Lee, General Counsel, appeared for Board staff; Jeffrey Gray appeared as administrative law counsel for the Board. Respondents appeared *pro se*.

Before the hearing, the following inquiry was read aloud in accordance with state ethics laws: “[d]oes any board member have any known conflict of interest with respect to this matter coming before the Board today? If so, please identify the conflict or appearance of conflict and refrain from any undue or inappropriate participation in the particular matter involved.” Mr. Anthony Worley stated that he had a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest and did not participate in the hearing or deliberations of this case.

PETITIONER'S LIST OF EXHIBITS

1. iGov Profile for Respondent Establishment
2. iGov Profile for Respondent Individual
3. Complaint
4. Documents in Support of Complaint
5. Response
6. Rebuttal
7. Documents in Support of Rebuttal
8. Notice of Hearing
9. Proof of Service of Notice of Hearing on Respondent Establishment
10. Proof of Service of Notice of Hearing on Respondent Individual
11. Consent Order in the Matter of Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation and Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, Board Case No. C23-0082

RESPONDENT'S LIST OF EXHIBITS

None

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation (hereinafter "Respondent Establishment") is licensed by the Board as Funeral Establishment Permit ("FE Permit") No. 0722 and Preneed Establishment Permit ("PN Permit") No. 0186 and, therefore, is subject to Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Title 21, Chapter 34 of the North Carolina Administrative Code. Respondent Establishment has held FE Permit 0722 since January 9, 2009, and has held PN Permit 0186 since July 16, 2018. Respondent Establishment is located in Clinton, North Carolina.
2. Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins (hereinafter "Respondent Individual" and collectively with Respondent Establishment, the "Respondents") is licensed by the Board as Funeral Director License No. 3736 and, therefore, is subject to Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Title 21, Chapter 34 of the North Carolina Administrative Code.
3. For all times relevant to this matter, Respondent Individual has served as the licensed manager and officer of Respondent Establishment, and holds a preneed sales license on behalf of Respondent Establishment.
4. On or about September 18, 2025, Board staff received a complaint from Jenny Lockamy Walker (the "Complainant") against Respondents, alleging concerns with the manner in which Respondents provided funeral services for several members of her family. At hearing, the Complainant testified credibly regarding her interactions with Respondents when arranging for her loved ones' funeral services, as set forth herein.
5. On September 19, 2021, the Complainant's brother-in-law, Christopher Patrick Wheeler, died.
6. Following Mr. Wheeler's death, Mr. Wheeler's family contracted with Respondents for the cremation of Mr. Wheeler's body.
7. Upon completion of the cremation, Respondents released Mr. Wheeler's cremated remains to Mr. Wheeler's family in an urn that the family had provided to Respondents.
8. Upon return to the family, the urn housing Mr. Wheeler's cremated remains was placed on the family's fireplace mantel.
9. On May 26, 2023, the Complainant's sister and Mr. Wheeler's wife, Adrienne "Sam" Lockamy-Wheeler, died.

10. Following Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler's death, Complainant contracted with Respondents for the cremation of Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler's body.
11. On or about June 8, 2023, Complainant took the urn containing Mr. Wheeler's cremated remains to Respondents, so that Respondents could place Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler's cremated remains in the same urn housing Mr. Wheeler's cremated remains.
12. On or about June 8, 2023, two representatives of Respondent Establishment took from Complainant the urn containing Mr. Wheeler's cremated remains and went into a small room, out of sight from the Complainant. Shortly thereafter, the two representatives of Respondent Establishment returned to the same room as Complainant, and told Complainant that the cremated remains for both Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler had been placed into the urn provided by Complainant.
13. Upon receiving the urn back from Respondent Establishment, Complainant placed the urn back on the family's fireplace mantel.
14. On May 12, 2024, the Complainant's mother, Clara Beatty Lockamy, died.
15. Following Ms. Lockamy's death, Mr. Wheeler's family contracted with Respondents for the cremation of Ms. Lockamy's body.
16. Upon completion of the cremation, Respondents released Ms. Lockamy's cremated remains to Complainant in a new urn that Complainant had provided to Respondents.
17. Upon return of the urn housing Ms. Lockamy's cremated remains from Respondents, Complainant placed the urn housing Ms. Lockamy's cremated remains on the family's fireplace mantel.
18. On or about September 2024, the family dog previously owned by Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler died. Complainant cremated the dog's body, with the intent of having the dog's cremated remains placed in the urn with Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler at a later date.
19. The urn housing the family dog's cremated remains also was placed on the family's fireplace mantel.
20. In March 2025, Complainant made efforts to obtain Respondents' services for the burial in Ms. Lockamy's cemetery plot of the cremated remains for Mr. Wheeler, Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler, Ms. Lockamy, and the family dog.
21. Between March 2025 and August 2025, Respondents did not contract with Complainant to provide the burial that she desired for Mr. Wheeler, Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler, Ms. Lockamy, and

the family dog. As such, in August 2025, Complainant retained the services of another funeral establishment to conduct the burial.

22. On or about August 17, 2025—on the night before the scheduled burial service—Complainant opened the urn that was supposed to contain the cremated remains for Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler, so that she could place the family dog's cremated remains inside. Upon doing so, Complainant learned that Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler's cremated remains were not inside the urn.
23. Complainant immediately contacted Respondent Individual to demand the return of Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler's cremated remains.
24. Respondent Individual initially told Complainant that he could not find either the cremated remains or the cremation file for Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler. However, the following day, on August 18, 2025, Respondent informed Complainant that he had found the cremated remains and cremation file for Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler.
25. On August 18, 2025, Complainant went to Respondent Establishment to pick up the cremated remains of Ms. Lockamy-Wheeler. While Respondent Individual was placing the cremated remains into the urn, Respondent Individual poked a hole in Mr. Wheeler's bag of cremated remains. Respondent individual then swiped the cremated remains to the end of the table and brushed them into the urn.
26. On or about September 3, 2025, Complainant returned to Respondent Establishment and obtained a copy of Ms. Lockamy's cremation file.
27. In reviewing Ms. Lockamy's cremation file, Complainant observed that her forged name had been placed on Ms. Lockamy's cremation authorization form.
28. At hearing, Complainant testified that she was present for the arrangement conference conducted by Respondents for Ms. Lockamy's funeral services and that she was not provided any documentation to sign for Ms. Lockamy's cremation authorization. Complainant further testified that she did not authorize anyone to sign her name to Ms. Lockamy's cremation authorization form. The Board finds Complainant's testimony to be credible.
29. At hearing, Respondent Individual testified that Complainant was not physically present for Ms. Lockamy's arrangements conference but gave verbal permission for the Complainant's daughter to sign the Complainant's name on Ms. Lockamy's cremation authorization form. The Board does not find Respondent Individual's testimony to be credible.
30. Ms. Lockamy's Statement of Funeral Goods and Services Selected reflects a charge of \$695 for embalming that was not requested by, or provided to, Ms. Lockamy's family.

31. Although Respondents provided a discount on the total bill in excess of \$695, Respondents' artificial inflation of the costs of Ms. Lockamy's funeral services, prior to offering a discount, constitutes a misrepresentation in the practice of funeral service.
32. For all times relevant to this proceeding, Respondents' licensures were under a two-year stayed suspension, pursuant to a Consent Order entered on December 6, 2023 for Board Case No. C23-0082 and contingent upon Respondents' compliance with all statutory and regulatory provisions governing the practice of funeral service.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. To the extent that the foregoing Findings of Fact contain conclusions of law, or that these Conclusions of Law are findings of fact, they are intended to be considered without regard to their given labels. *Charlotte v. Heath*, 226 N.C. 750, 755, 40 S.E.2d 600, 604 (1946); *Peters v. Pennington*, 210 N.C. App. 1, 15, 707 S.E.2d 724, 735 (2011). *Warren v. Dep't of Crime Control*, 221 N.C. App. 376, 377, 726 S.E.2d 920, 923, disc. rev. den., 366 N.C. 408, 735 S.E.2d 175 (2012); *Watlington v. Dep't of Soc. Servs. Rockingham Cty.*, 261 N.C. App. 760, 768, 822 S.E.2d 43, 48-49 (2018).
2. Respondents were properly served with process.
3. The Board is authorized under Article 3A, Chapter 150B of the North Carolina General Statutes, to hear this matter.
4. Respondents are subject to Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Title 21, Chapter 34 of the North Carolina Administrative Code and the standards set forth in Funeral Industry Practices, 16 C.F.R. § 453 (1984).
5. Respondents are subject to jurisdiction before the Board.
6. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 90-210.25(e)(1)(b) and 90-210.69(c)(4), which prohibits fraud or misrepresentation in the operation of a licensee's business.
7. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1)(i), which prohibits the failure to treat a dead human body with respect at all times.
8. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 90-210.25(e)(1)(j) and 90-210.69(c)(6), which prohibits licensees from violating or cooperating with others to violate any of the provisions of this Article or Articles 13D, 13E, or 13F of this Chapter, any rules and regulations of the Board, or the standards set forth in Funeral Industry Practices, 16 C.F.R. 453 (1984), as amended from time to time. Specifically, the acts

and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate 16 C.F.R. § 453.2(b)(5) by reflecting charges for services on the Statement of Funeral Goods and Services Selected that were not requested by, or rendered to, a consumer.

9. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1)(p), which requires licensees to provide, within a reasonable time, either the goods and services for which consumers contracted or a refund for the price of goods and services for which consumers paid but were not fulfilled.
10. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. 90-210.125(a)(14), by signing a cremation authorization form with actual knowledge that the signature of the authorizing agent therein was forged.
11. *The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-32 constitute a breach of the Consent Order entered by the Board on December 6, 2023 in Board Case No. C23-0082.*
12. Respondent Individual has committed one or more of the violations described above and is not currently fit to practice. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1), the Board has the authority to suspend, revoke, or refuse to issue or renew the funeral director license of Respondent Individual. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.69(c), the Board also has the authority to revoke, suspend, or refuse to issue or renew the preneed sales license of Respondent Individual, or to place Respondent Individual on probation, and to assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.00.
13. *Respondent Individual committed one or more of the violations described above in his capacity as an officer and licensed manager of Respondent Establishment. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(d)(4), the Board has the authority to revoke, suspend, or refuse to issue or renew the funeral establishment permit of Respondent Establishment, to place Respondent Establishment on probation, and to assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.00. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.69(c), the Board also has the authority to revoke, suspend, or refuse to issue or renew the preneed establishment permit and all ancillary preneed sales licenses of Respondent Establishment, or to place Respondent Establishment on probation and to assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.00.*
14. Respondent Individual and Respondent Establishment committed one or more of the violations described above in violation of the Consent Order entered by the Board on December 6, 2023, in Board Case No. C23-0082. As such, the Board is entitled to recover attorney's fees and costs associated with holding the hearing against all Respondents jointly, in an amount not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00), as set forth in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.23(d1).

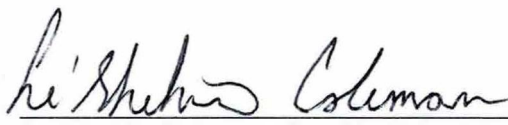
FINAL AGENCY DECISION

The North Carolina Board of Funeral Service hereby issues the following decision:

1. The funeral director license of Respondent Individual is hereby suspended until such time that Respondent Individual completes a Board-sponsored continuing education course on cremation laws.
2. Upon completion of the Board-sponsored continuing education course, the suspension of Respondent Individual's funeral director license shall be lifted and Respondent Individual's funeral director license shall be on probation for two (2) years on the following terms and conditions:
 - a. Respondent Individual shall not serve as the licensed manager of a funeral establishment in North Carolina while on probation; and
 - b. Respondent Individual shall comply with all statutes and rules regulating the practice of funeral service in North Carolina while on probation.
3. Within twelve (12) months following effective date of this Final Agency Decision, Respondent Individual shall pay a civil penalty of Three Thousand Seven Hundred Dollar (\$3,700.00) to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund, in accordance with Article 31A of Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes.
4. The funeral establishment permit of Respondent Establishment is hereby placed on a stayed suspension for a period of two (2) years; provided, however, that the stay of the suspension shall be automatically lifted upon receipt by Board staff of evidence tending to show that, during the period of stayed suspension, Respondent Establishment has violated a statute or rule regulating the practice of funeral service in North Carolina.
5. The Board hereby directs counsel for the Board to prepare and serve on Respondents an affidavit of fees and costs incurred by Board staff associated with holding the above-captioned hearing. Within sixty (60) days following service of said affidavit, Respondents shall reimburse the Board for the fees and costs set forth in said affidavit.
6. The Board shall retain jurisdiction under Article 3A, Chapter 150B for all administrative hearings held in connection with, or pursuant to, this Final Agency Decision. If the Board receives evidence of any violations of the Board's statutes and rules identified during the period of stayed suspension, or any violation of the terms and conditions of this Final Agency Decision, the Board shall schedule a show cause hearing for a determination of the violations. If the Board determines that a violation has occurred, the Board may impose such disciplinary action as it determines is appropriate and is authorized by law.

7. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 150B-45(a)(2), Respondents have thirty (30) days from the date that this Final Agency Decision is served pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 1A-1, Rule 5(b) to file a Petition for Judicial Review. The Petition for Judicial Review must be filed in the Superior Court of the county where the person aggrieved by the administrative decision resides, or in the case of a person residing outside the State, in the county where the contested case which resulted in the final decision was filed. Since this is an administrative appeal, no additional evidence will be taken. If a Petition is filed, a Superior Court Judge will review the Final Agency Decision to determine whether there were any legal errors in the Final Agency Decision.
8. This Final Agency Decision shall take effect upon service of Respondents, in a manner consistent with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 150B-42(a).

By order of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service, this, the 23rd day of
March, 2026.

By: 
Le'Shekia Coleman, President
N.C. Board of Funeral Service