

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE
CASE NO. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118

In the matter of:

Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley
Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation,
Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and
Stephen Everette Grimes,

)
)
)
)
)
)

CONSENT ORDER

Respondents

THIS CAUSE, coming before the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service (hereinafter the “Board”) at its offices at 1033 Wade Avenue, Suite 108, Raleigh, North Carolina 27605, with a quorum present, the Board and Respondent Establishment stipulate and agree to entry of the following Consent Order:

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.
2. 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.
3. Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins (hereinafter “Respondent Hawkins”) 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. For all times relevant to this matter, Respondent Hawkins has served as the officer of Respondent Establishment and has held a preneed sales license on behalf of Respondent Establishment.
4. Stephen Everette Grimes (hereinafter “Respondent Grimes”) is licensed by the Board as Funeral Service License No. 1853 and, therefore, is subject to Chapter 90 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Title 21, Chapter 34 of the North Carolina Administrative Code.
5. Prior to April 16, 2026, Respondent Hawkins served as the licensed manager of Respondent Establishment. Since April 16, 2026, Respondent Grimes has served as the licensed manager of Respondent Establishment.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order

P a g e | 2

6. On December 6, 2023, Respondents' licensures were under a two-year stayed suspension, pursuant to a Consent Order entered by Respondents and the Board in Board Case No. C23-0082. The stay of the suspension was contingent upon Respondents' compliance with all statutory and regulatory provisions governing the practice of funeral service.
7. On March 11, 2026, the Board held a disciplinary hearing in Board Case No. C25-0104, following which the Board entered a Final Agency Decision on March 23, 2026.
8. In the March 23, 2026 Final Agency Decision, the Board found that Respondents violated statutes and rules governed by the Board following entry of the Consent Order in Board Case No. C23-0082, and ordered, among other things, the following:
 - a. The funeral director license of Respondent Hawkins is hereby suspended until such time that Respondent Hawkins completes a Board-sponsored continuing education course on cremation laws.
 - b. Upon completion of the Board-sponsored continuing education course, the suspension of Respondent Hawkins' funeral director license shall be lifted and Respondent Hawkins' funeral director license shall be on probation for two (2) years on the following terms and conditions:
 - i. Respondent Hawkins shall not serve as the licensed manager of a funeral establishment in North Carolina while on probation; and
 - ii. Respondent Hawkins shall comply with all statutes and rules regulating the practice of funeral service in North Carolina while on probation.
 - c. Within twelve (12) months following effective date of this Final Agency Decision, Respondent Hawkins 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.
 - d. 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.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order
Page | 3

Board Case No. C26-0104

9. On or about April 5, 2026, Helene Sessoms Peña (“Complainant Peña”) delivered an infant son prematurely, and the baby died at birth.
10. On or about April 6, 2026, Complainant Peña contracted with Respondent Establishment for a cremation of her deceased infant.
11. On or about April 15, 2026, Respondent Establishment obtained a standard authorization for cremation signed by the Complainant for her deceased infant.
12. Complainant Peña made repeated efforts between April 15, 2026 and June 18, 2026 to have Respondents conduct the cremation for which they had been contracted to perform, but without success. Respondents provided Complainant Peña with shifting and false reasons for the delay, including the misrepresentation that the delays were being caused by a contracted crematory.
13. On or about June 18, 2026, Board staff received a complaint from Complainant Peña regarding the above-described acts and/or omissions by Respondents. Board staff opened the Complaint as Board Case No. C26-0104.
14. On or about June 22, 2026, Board Inspector William Babb, Jr. inspected Respondent Establishment and confirmed that Complainant Peña’s deceased infant remained in the care and custody of the Respondent Establishment, without having yet been cremated.
15. On or about June 22, 2026, Inspector Babb confirmed that no crematory with which Respondent Establishment does business had taken custody of the deceased infant, nor had Respondents made arrangements for scheduling or delivery to a crematory for the deceased infant.
16. On or about June 23, 2026, Respondents delivered the deceased infant to Goldsboro Cremation Service, which performed the cremation on June 24, 2026.

Board Case No. C25-0118

17. On or about March 1, 2025, Ms. Donnie Butler, who is the mother of Laquasha Bowles (“Complainant Bowles”), died.
18. On or about March 2, 2025, Complainant Bowles made arrangements with Respondent Establishment for the Decedent’s funeral services.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order

P a g e | 4

19. Respondent Establishment did not provide Complainant Bowles with a statement of funeral goods and services selected to memorialize the funeral arrangements signed by a licensee, in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(2).
20. Respondent Establishment did not provide Complainant Bowles with an itemized accounting of the amounts paid toward the funeral arrangements, in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(2).
21. Respondent Establishment did not provide Complainant Bowles with an itemized accounting of the amounts paid toward the funeral arrangements, in accordance with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(2).
22. Respondent Establishment made significant errors on the death certificate for Ms. Donnie Butler and has failed to provide the information requested by NC Vital Records to effectuate an amendment of the Decedent's death certificate.
23. On or about November 7, 2025, Board staff received a complaint from Complainant Bowles regarding the above-described acts and/or omissions by Respondent Establishment. Board staff opened the Complaint as Board Case No. C25-0118.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

24. 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).
25. Respondents are subject to the jurisdiction of the Board.
26. The Board is authorized under Article 3A, Chapter 150B of the North Carolina General Statutes to hear this matter.
27. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-23 constitute violations of the Final Agency Decision entered by the Board on March 23, 2026 in Board Case No. C25-0104.
28. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-23 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.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul

Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes

Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118

Consent Order

P a g e | 5

29. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-23 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1)(b), which prohibits fraud or misrepresentation in the operation of a licensee's business.
30. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-23 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.
31. The acts and omissions of the Respondent Hawkins and Respondent Establishment described in Paragraphs 1-23 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(2), which requires licensees to provide consumer with whom arrangements are made with a statement of funeral goods and services selected signed by a licensee.
32. The acts and omissions of the Respondent Hawkins and Respondent Grimes described in Paragraphs 1-23 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(d), which requires the licensed manager of a funeral establishment to oversee the daily operations of the funeral establishment.
33. The acts and omissions of the Respondents described in Paragraphs 1-23 violate N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1)(j), 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 17-23 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.
34. Respondent Hawkins 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 Hawkins. 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 Hawkins, or to place Respondent Hawkins on probation, and to assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.00.
35. Respondent Grimes has committed one or more of the violations described above and is currently fit to practice. Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-210.25(e)(1), the Board has the authority to place Respondent Grimes funeral service license on probation. 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

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order

P a g e | 6

of Respondent Grimes, or to place Respondent Grimes on probation, and to assess a civil penalty not to exceed \$5,000.00.

36. Respondents Hawkins and Respondent Grimes committed one or more of the violations described above in their 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.

37. Respondent Hawkins and Respondent Establishment committed one or more of the violations described above in violation of the Consent Order entered by the Board on March 23, 2026, in Board Case No. C25-0104. 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).

BASED upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and in lieu of further proceedings, Respondents wishes to resolve this matter by consent and agree that Board staff and counsel may discuss this Consent Order with the Board *ex parte* whether or not the Board accepts this Consent Order as written.

Whereas Respondents acknowledge that they have read this entire document and understand it;

Whereas Respondents acknowledges that they enter into this Consent Order freely and voluntarily;

Whereas Respondents acknowledge that they have had full and adequate opportunity to confer with legal counsel in connection with this matter;

Whereas Respondents understand that this Consent Order must be presented to the Board for approval and that Respondents hereby waive any argument that any Board members considering this Consent Order are disqualified from participating in a hearing of this matter; and

Whereas the Board has determined that the public interest is served by resolving this matter as set forth below.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order
P a g e | 7

THEREFORE, with the consent of Respondents, it is ORDERED that:

1. The At-Need and Preneed Establishment Permits of Respondent Establishment are hereby revoked. All permits and certificates issued by the Board, along with all active preneed contracts for which Respondent Establishment currently serves as trustee, shall be provided to Board staff within ten (10) days following entry of this Consent Order.
2. The funeral director license of Respondent Hawkins shall be placed on a stayed suspension for a period of five (5) years, beginning on the effective date of this Consent Order; 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:
 - a. Respondent Hawkins violates a statute or rule regulated by the Board;
 - b. Respondent Hawkins fails to practice under the supervision of an individual who is licensed in good standing with the Board as a funeral director or funeral service licensee and who is identified in writing to the Board as Respondent Hawkins' licensed supervisor;
 - c. Respondent Hawkins provides funeral services at any funeral home located at 1246 Hobbton Hwy, Clinton, NC. For purposes of clarity, Respondent Hawkins shall not, on behalf of any funeral home located at 1246 Hobbton Hwy, Clinton, NC, do any of the following:
 - i. Obtain written permission for embalming;
 - ii. Obtain information for notices and authorizations including death certificates and obituaries;
 - iii. Show funeral merchandise or pictures of funeral merchandise to a person or persons making funeral arrangements;
 - iv. Describe funeral merchandise characteristics with a person or persons making funeral arrangements;
 - v. Describe service options, such as ceremonies or services available from a funeral establishment or crematory, with a person or persons making funeral arrangements;
 - vi. Make funeral arrangements or sell funeral goods or services available on a General Price List, Casket Price List, or Outer Burial Container Price List;
 - vii. Sign disclosure statement required by law to be given to the person or persons making funeral arrangements;

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes
Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118
Consent Order

P a g e | 8

- viii. Accept payment for any funeral goods or services, whether by cash, credit or insurance assignment; or
 - ix. Directing, or otherwise acting as the person in charge of conducting, funeral, memorial, graveside, or committal services.
- d. Respondent Hawkins fails to remit, on or before March 23, 2027, the civil penalty assessed in the Final Agency Decision of Board Case No. C25-0104 in the amount 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; and
- e. Respondent Hawkins fails to remit, on or before December 31, 2026, Three Thousand Thirty-Seven and 66/100 Dollars (\$3,037.66), which is an amount equal to the attorney's fees and costs incurred by Board staff associated with the show cause hearing held before the Board on March 11, 2026 in Board Case No. C25-0104.
- 3. Respondent Hawkins agrees that, going forward, he will not manage or hold ownership interests in a funeral establishment located in North Carolina. Respondent Hawkins further agrees that, going forward, he will not serve as the supervisor of any trainee registered with the Board.
- 4. Respondent Grimes' funeral service 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.
- 5. The Board shall retain jurisdiction under Article 3A, Chapter 150B for all administrative hearings held in connection with or pursuant to this Consent Order. If the Board receives evidence that Respondents have violated any term of this Consent Order or any other law or rule enforced by the Board, 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.
- 6. This Consent Order shall take effect immediately upon its execution by the Board and Respondents and reflect the entire agreement between Respondents and the Board, there being no agreement of any kind, verbal or otherwise, which varies, alters, or modifies this Consent Order.

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul

Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes

Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118

Consent Order

P a g e | 9

7. No modification or waiver of any provision of this Consent Order shall be effective unless it is in writing, adopted and approved by the Board, and signed by the parties affected.
8. Both the Board and Respondents participated in the drafting of this Consent Order. Any ambiguities herein shall not be construed against either party in any future civil or administrative proceeding.
9. Respondents hereby waive any requirement under any law or rule that this Consent Order be served upon them.
10. Upon its execution by the Board and Respondents, this Consent Order shall become a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes and shall be subject to public inspection and dissemination pursuant to the provisions thereof.

[THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK]

North Carolina Board of Funeral Service

In the Matter of: Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation, Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins, and Stephen Everette Grimes

Board Case No. C26-0104 / C25-0104 / C25-0118

Consent Order

Page | 10

CONSENTED TO:

Harvesting Hope Inc. d/b/a Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation

Signed by: Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins Date: 9/3/2026
By: 57532A3100914EB...
Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins
Manager

Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins

Signed by: Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins Date: 9/3/2026
57532A3100914EB...

Stephen Everette Grimes

Signed by: Stephen E. Grimes Date: 9/3/2026
9CB863861061406...

By Order of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service, this the 9th day of Sep, 2026.

By: Le'Shekia Coleman
Le'Shekia Coleman
Board President