

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

Chon Clayton

Respondent.

No. 2012-033

STIPULATED FACTS,
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

I. STIPULATION

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, CHON CLAYTON, and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through MELANIE DeLEON, Executive Director. The following stipulated facts, conclusions, and agreed order will be binding upon the parties if fully executed, and if accepted by the Board without modification(s), and will not be binding if rejected by the Board, or if the Respondent does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, to the stipulation.

Section 1: PROCEDURAL FACTS

1.1. On May 21, 2012, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) received an anonymous complaint alleging that Chon Clayton, Park Ranger 3, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Parks) may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act by using state resources for his personal benefit.

1.2. The Board is authorized under RCW 34.05.060 to establish procedures for attempting and executing informal settlement of matters in lieu of more formal proceedings under the Administrative Procedures Act, including adjudicative hearings. The Board has established such procedures under WAC 292-100-090.

1.3. Chon Clayton understands that if Board staff proves any or all of the alleged violations at a hearing, the Board may impose sanctions, including a civil penalty under RCW 42.52.480(1)(b) of up to \$5,000, or the greater of three times the economic value of anything received or sought in violation of chapter 42.52 RCW, for each violation found. The Board may also order the payment of costs, including reasonable investigative costs, under RCW 42.52.480(1)(c).

1.4. Chon Clayton recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude he violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. Therefore, in the interest of seeking an informal and expeditious resolution of this matter, the parties agree to entry of the stipulated findings of fact, conclusions of law and agreed order set forth below.

1.5. Chon Clayton waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or his acceptance of any modification(s) proposed by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of WAC 292-100-090(2) which provides in part:

The board has the option of accepting, rejecting, or modifying the proposed stipulation or asking for additional facts to be presented. If the board accepts the stipulation or modifies the stipulation with the agreement of the respondent, the board shall enter an order in conformity with the terms of the stipulation. If the board rejects the stipulation or the respondent does not agree to the board's proposed modifications to the stipulation, the normal process will continue. The proposed stipulation and information obtained during formal settlement discussions shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing.

1.6. If the Board accepts this stipulation, the Board will release and discharge Chon Clayton from all further ethics proceedings under chapter 42.52 RCW for matters arising out of the facts contained in the complaint in this matter, subject to payment of the full amount of the civil penalty due and owing, any other costs imposed, and compliance with all other terms and conditions of the agreed order. Chon Clayton in turn agrees to release and discharge the Board,

its officers, agents and employees from all claims, damages, and causes of action arising out of this complaint and this stipulation and agreed order.

1.7. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order does not purport to settle any other claims between Chon Clayton and the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, the State of Washington, or other third party, which may be filed in the future.

1.8. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order is enforceable under RCW 34.05.578 and any other applicable statutes or rules.

1.9. If the Board rejects this stipulation, or if Chon Clayton does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, this matter will be scheduled for an administrative hearing in front of the Board and Chon Clayton waives any objection to participation by any Board member at any subsequent hearing to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Chon Clayton understands and agrees that this proposed stipulation and information obtained during any formal settlement discussions held between the parties shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.

Section 2: FINDINGS OF FACT

2.1. Mr. Clayton was a Park Ranger 3, Parks and Recreation Commission, for all times pertinent to this investigation.

2.2. Mr. Clayton took two storage lockers from Bogachiel State Park to use for his personal benefit at his new residence at Loomis Lake. As of February 17, 2012, Mr. Clayton had not yet returned them, even at the request of his prior supervisor.

2.3. Mr. Clayton was scheduled for training at Fort Worden State Park to start at noon, on March 11, 2012. Instead of leaving from Ilwaco to drive to Fort Worden on March 11, 2012, he decided to leave on March 10th, driving to Forks to visit friends and to pick up some personal items from his former house at Bogachiel.

2.4. Driving from Ilwaco to Fort Worden takes about four hours and covers 182 miles. The same trip going through Forks takes 6 hours and cover 280 miles, which is approximately 100 more miles and two more hours than the more direct route.

2.5. During this same period, Mr. Clayton was being investigated by his agency for a similar violation that occurred in January of 2012.

2.6. On July 2, 2012, Mr. Clayton received notification from his agency that his pay would be reduced by 10 percent for three months for the above-mentioned violations along with other work performance issues. Mr. Clayton's pay was reduced from \$4,860 to \$4,406 for a total reduction in pay of \$1,362.

Section 3: CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Chon Clayton and over the subject matter of this complaint.

3.2. Pursuant to WAC 292-100-090(1), the parties have the authority to resolve this matter under the terms contained herein, subject to Board approval.

3.3. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from using state resources for their benefit. RCW 42.52.160(1) states:

No state officer or state employee may employ or use any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the officer, employee, or another.

3.4. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.4, Chon Clayton used state resources in violation of RCW 42.52.160 and WAC 292-110-010.

3.5. The Board is authorized to impose sanctions for violations to the Ethics Act pursuant to RCW 42.52.360. The Board has set forth criteria in WAC 292-120-030 for imposing sanctions and consideration of any mitigating or aggravating factors.

Section 4: AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING FACTORS

In determining the appropriateness of the civil penalty, the Board reviewed the criteria in WAC 292-120-030. Mitigating factors include, Chon Clayton's agency reduced his pay 10 percent for three months because of this violation and other policy violations. Aggravating factors include that the violation was committed while Mr. Clayton was under investigation from his agency for a similar violation.

Section 5: AGREED ORDER

Chon Clayton will pay a civil penalty in the amount of four hundred and fifty dollars (\$450.00). Payment is due in full 45 days after this stipulation is accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

II. CERTIFICATION

I, Chon Clayton, hereby certify that I have read this Stipulation and Agreed Order in its entirety; that my counsel of record, if any, has fully explained the legal significance and consequence of it; that I fully understand and agree to all of it; and that it may be presented to the Board without my appearance. I knowingly and voluntarily waive my right to a hearing in this matter; and if the Board accepts the Stipulation and Agreed Order, I understand that I will receive a signed copy.

Chon Clayton 11-2-12
CHON CLAYTON Date
Respondent

Stipulated to and presented by:

Melanie deLeon 11-6-12
Melanie deLeon Date
Executive Director

