



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

November 10, 2025

The Honorable Erika Bell
Councilmember
City of Hagerstown
1 E. Franklin Street, Room 202
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Dear Councilmember Bell:

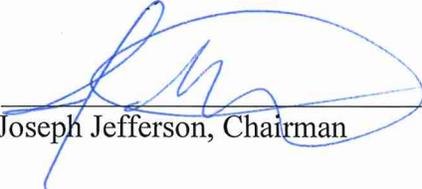
Your email of November 5, 2025, regarding the complaint filed by Senator Paul Corderman (2025-05), was received and has been reviewed. You indicated you are granting permission for the information from the Commission's opinion to be released.

The Commission does not currently have a provision in place for publicly releasing the findings from our meetings, except for as provided through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

By waiving confidentiality, you may use the content of the letter you received from the Commission in any manner you deem appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

**ETHICS COMMISSION FOR THE
CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND**

BY: 
Joseph Jefferson, Chairman

cc – *Ethics Commission Members*
Kandace Carpenter, Esquire





CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

Office of the City Clerk
One East Franklin Street • Hagerstown, MD 21740
Telephone: 301.766.4183 • TDD: 301.797.6617 • Website: www.hagerstownmd.org



THE ETHICS COMMISSION FOR THE CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

c/o City Clerk, 1 East Franklin Street, Room 200, Hagerstown, MD 21740

COMPLAINT

The undersigned, hereinafter known as the Complainant, pursuant to Chapter 33 and 35 of the Code of the City of Hagerstown, hereby files the following complaint against Councilmember Erika Bell hereafter known as Respondent, a person subject to the City of Hagerstown Code of Ethics pursuant to §33-2.

It is alleged that Respondent has violated the following provision(s) of the Ethics Law:

Use of Prestige of Office

The facts upon which this complaint is based are as follows: (Please continue on back if necessary and attach any relevant supporting documentation.)

See Attached Supporting documentation from our office

I DO SOLEMNLY DECLARE AND AFFIRM UNDER THE PENALTIES OF PERJURY THAT THE FACTS RECITED HEREIN ARE TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF.

Name (Please print): Senator Paul D. Gordenman Date: 9/29/2025

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Address: P.O. Box 3710
Hagerstown, MD 21742

Phone Number: 240-313-3929 E-mail: Paul.Gordenman@Senate.Maryland.Gov

PAUL D. CORDERMAN
Legislative District 2
Frederick and Washington Counties



James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 403
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3903 • 301-858-3903
800-492-7122 Ext. 3903
Paul.Corderman@senate.state.md.us

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Date: September 29, 2025

City of Hagerstown Ethics Commission
c/o City Clerk's Office
1 E. Franklin St., Room 202
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Subject: Complaint/Ethics Review under Chapter 33, City of Hagerstown Code of Ethics

1. Complainant Information

- Name: The Maryland State Senate office of Paul D. Corderman (District 2)
- Address: P.O. Box 3716
- Email / Phone: Paul.Corderman@Senate.Maryland.Gov

2. Respondent

- Name: Erika Bell
- Title / Position: Councilmember
- Address of City Office: 1 E. Franklin Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740

3. Nature of the Alleged Violation

§ 33-4 **Conflicts of interest.**

- **G.** Use of prestige of office.

(1) General.

(a) An official or employee may not intentionally use the prestige of office or public position:

[1] For the private gain of that official or employee or the private gain of another;

4. Information as presented to our Office:

- On more than one occasion, over the last several months, Councilmember Bell has interacted with the Hagerstown Police Department (HPD); influencing or attempting to influence conversations by inserting her title as a Councilmember to provide gain for herself and/or others with whom she was associated during those interactions.
- This influence occurred during multiple traffic stop investigations of Terrance Lee Murphy where Councilmember Bell inserted herself and her Title as a Councilmember into the HPD's traffic stop investigation.
- This influence occurred after a bathroom vandalism incident at Wheaton Park where Councilmember Bell inserted herself and her Title as a Councilmember into HPD's vandalism investigation at the Park.

- On, or before/after July 27, 2025, Terrance Lee Murphy was in possession of a handgun in Wheaton Park. Mr. Murphy dropped the handgun in the Park. Mr. Murphy then gave possession of the handgun to Councilmember Bell who afterwards put the handgun into a vehicle.
 - Subsequently, HPD initiated a traffic stop investigation with Terrance Lee Murphy in which Councilmember Bell inserted herself and her Title as a Councilmember into HPD's traffic stop investigation.
 - Late August/early September 2025, Terrance Lee Murphy was charged with illegal possession of a firearm in reference to the above incident.
 - After Councilmember Bell requested legal counsel regarding the above investigation, Councilmember Bell contacted directly and had a direct, one on one, undocumented approximate 2-hour meeting with Hagerstown Police Chief Kifer.

5. Supporting Evidence and Documentation

Pursuant to General Provisions, section 4-203, of the Annotated Code of Maryland, a Public Information Act request has been made of the following:

- 1) Any and all of Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) body camera footage of each instance in its entirety that Hagerstown City Councilmember Erika Bell has been recorded in over the last ten (10) months. To include any and all traffic stops, service calls, investigations, and/or any other interactions that include Ms. Bell recorded on an HPD Body Camera over the last ten (10) months.
- 2) Video footage from the City of Hagerstown City-Wide Surveillance System located in and/or around Wheaton Park on July 27, 2025 that includes an interaction or believed interaction involving a handgun between Terrance Lee Murphy and Erika Bell.

Additionally, it is our Office's understanding that the information as described in Section 4 of the above is known by many of those within the Administration of the City of Hagerstown, including but not limited to; the City Administrator, various City Department Directors, the Chief of Police, other leadership within the City Police Department, the Executive leadership and Membership of AFSCME Council 67, local 3373; The Hagerstown Police Union.

6. Sworn Statement / Oath

I hereby swear (or affirm) under penalty of perjury that the information set forth above is as described to our office and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: 
 Date: 9/29/2025

7. Request for Review by City of Hagerstown Ethics Commission

The above information has been brought to our office which we in turn are providing to the City of Hagerstown Ethics Commission to:

- Complete a thorough review and investigation of the aforementioned information as described above by:
 - Reviewing the Body camera footage and City-wide Surveillance footage as documented above in Sections 3-5.
 - Completing interviews related to the information documented above in Sections 3-5, with, but not limited to; Hagerstown City Councilmember Erika Bell, City of Hagerstown Administrator, City of Hagerstown Director of Human Resources, other City of Hagerstown Department Directors who have direct knowledge, the Hagerstown Police Chief, other HPD Leadership with direct knowledge, Executive Leadership and Staff Representative of Police Union Local 3373, Mayor & Councilmembers, as well as any other individuals or entities the Commission feels relevant or becomes aware of during their investigative review.
- Complete a public hearing that shares an overview of the investigation's findings.
- Issue a public opinion/statement of determination of the Commission's findings.
- Advise if disciplinary action is warranted and/or direction of next steps that should be taken should a violation be found.



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN

Public Information Act Request Form

PURSUANT TO GENERAL PROVISIONS, SECTION 4-203, OF THE ANNOTATED CODE OF MARYLAND, THE UNDERSIGNED REQUESTS A COPY OF THE FOLLOWING RECORDS:

Date: 9/29/2025

Requestor: Paul Corderman Phone No: 240-313-3929

Requestor's Address: P.O. Box 3716

City: Hagerstown State: MD Zip: 21742

Email address: Paul.Corderman@Senate.Maryland.Gov

I request the following public record(s):

1) Any and all of Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) Body camera footage of each instance in its entirety that Hagerstown City Councilmember Erika Bell has been recorded in over the last ten (10) months. To include any and all traffic stops, service calls, investigations, and/or any other interactions that include Councilmember Bell recorded on an HPD Body camera over the last ten (10) months.

2) Video footage from the City of Hagerstown City-Wide Surveillance System located in and/or around Wheaton Park on July 27, 2025 that includes the interaction or believed interaction involving a handgun between Terrance Lee Murphy and Erika Bell.

Requestor's Signature: 

Received by: _____ Date: 09/29/2025

Please email PIA Request form to piarequest@hagerstownmd.org.



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

October 15, 2025

Senator Paul D. Corderman
P. O. Box 3716
Hagerstown, MD 21742

RE: COMPLAINT 2025-05

Dear Senator Corderman:

A meeting of the City Ethics Commission was held on October 13, 2025 to review the complaint you filed dated September 29, 2025.

I. AUTHORITY

Pursuant to Section 33-3, *Ethics Commission*, of the Code of the City of Hagerstown, this Commission is authorized “to process and make determinations as to complaints filed by any person alleging violations of this chapter.”

II. BACKGROUND

- A. **Factual Background.** You filed a complaint requesting that the City Ethics Commission review your concerns that Councilmember Erika Bell has violated Section 33-4, Conflicts of Interest, Paragraph G, Use of Prestige of Office. Your complaint indicates that on more than one occasion Councilmember Bell has interacted with the Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) influencing or attempting to influence conversations by inserting her title as a Councilmember to provide gain for herself and/or others with whom she was associated during those interactions. Specifically, you provided an incident with Terrance Lee Murphy and a bathroom vandalism incident at Wheaton Park.
- B. **The Code of Ethics.** The Code of Ethics for the City of Hagerstown is found in Chapter 33. The code’s purpose is to ensure that impartiality and independent judgment of public officials and employees is maintained. The Code of Ethics addresses interests, abuse of prestige of office, gifts and conflicts of interest as to City elected officials, appointed officials, members



of Boards and Commissions and employees. The Code also requires compliance with Maryland law.

III. CONCLUSION

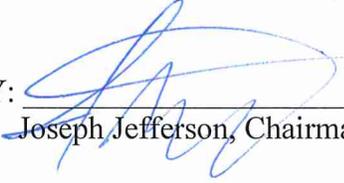
Your complaint does not rise to the level of a violation as defined in the City's Code of Ethics, and therefore this matter does not fall under the Commission's jurisdiction. The complaint is dismissed.

The Commission reminds you that per the Commission's Rules of Procedure, you may not disclose any information relating to this Complaint, unless the Respondent authorizes its release.

Respectfully submitted,

**ETHICS COMMISSION FOR THE
CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND**

BY: _____


Joseph Jefferson, Chairman

*cc – Ethics Commission Members
Kandace Carpenter, Esquire
Councilmember Erika Bell*