



## Judicial Inquiry Commission

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### **Joint Press Release**

The Judicial Inquiry Commission of the State of Alabama (“the Commission”) and Former Brookside Municipal Judge James M. Wooten (“Former Judge Wooten”) jointly issue the following public statement for immediate release pursuant to Rule 5A(2) of the Rules of Procedure for the Judicial Inquiry Commission:

The Commission was established in 1973 pursuant to Amendment 328 of the Alabama Constitution [now Ala. Const. of 1901, art. VI, § 156 (Off. Recomp.)]. The Commission is convened permanently as an independent agency within the judicial branch with authority to: (1) initiate or receive complaints concerning an alleged violation of the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics by a judge, misconduct in judicial office, failure to perform judicial duties, or inability to perform judicial duties because of a physical or mental disability; (2) conduct confidential investigations of allegations asserted in verified complaints filed with the Commission; and (3) file and prosecute charges in the Alabama Court of the Judiciary. Pursuant to Section 156(a) of the Alabama Constitution, the Commission is made up of nine members: one intermediate appellate judge, appointed by the Alabama Supreme Court; two circuit judges, appointed by the Alabama Circuit Judges’ Association; two members of the Alabama State Bar, appointed by the Board of Bar Commissioners of the Alabama State Bar; and three lay members and one district judge, appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Alabama Senate.

Since 2009, Former Judge Wooten continuously served as the Municipal Judge for the Town of Brookside, Alabama. In February 2022, the Commission began an investigation pursuant to a verified complaint of Former Judge Wooten's running, management, and handling of Brookside's Municipal Court. The Commission subpoenaed multiple witnesses and documents. Former Judge Wooten voluntarily provided information to the Commission upon request.

On December 14, 2022, Former Judge Wooten resigned from his position as Brookside Municipal Judge, effective that date. Additionally, Former Judge Wooten's law license was suspended by the Alabama Supreme Court for 91 days, effective December 21, 2022, as a result of a separate investigation by the Alabama State Bar concerning allegations unrelated to those that were being investigated by the Commission. On January 24, 2023, Former Judge Wooten gave affirmation to the Commission that he would neither seek nor accept any judicial position in the future.

Given Former Judge Wooten's resignation as Municipal Judge coupled with the suspension of his law license and further affirmation to the Commission that he would neither seek nor accept any further judicial position, the Commission has concluded that no further proceedings before the Commission are warranted in this matter and has terminated its investigation into the allegations against Former Judge Wooten. To the extent future issues may be presented to the Commission in a verified complaint as concerns the operation of the Brookside Municipal Court, the Commission will take appropriate action.