STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
	)	FOR THE NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF CHARLESTON	)	
	)	Case No.: 2025-CP-10-
James William Haynie;	)	
	)	**SUMMONS**
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	Jury trial demanded
	)	
Kevin M. Cunnane,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
	)	

TO THE ABOVE NAMED DEFENDANT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and required to answer the Complaint herein, a copy of which is herewith served upon you, and to serve a copy of your answer to this Complaint upon the subscribers, at the address shown below, within thirty days after service hereof exclusive of the day of service. If you fail to answer the Complaint, judgement by default may be rendered against you for the relief demanded in this Complaint.

J. BROOKS DAVIS, P.C.

By: s/ J. Brooks Davis

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ATTORNEY FOR THE PLAINTIFF

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
	)	FOR THE NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
COUNTY OF CHARLESTON	)	
	)	Case No.: 2025-CP-10-
James William Haynie;	)	
	)	**COMPLAINT**
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	Jury trial demanded
	)	
Kevin M. Cunnane,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
	)	

TO THE ABOVE NAMED DEFENDANT:

COMES NOW Plaintiff James William Haynie by and through the undersigned attorney, complaining of Defendant Kevin M. Cunnane, would respectfully show and allege unto this Court as follows.

PARTIES, JUSRISDICTION AND VENUE

1. The Plaintiff James William Haynie ("Haynie") is a citizen and resident of the County of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina, and serves the Town of Mount Pleasant as Mayor. The Town of Mount Pleasant is a municipality within the County of Charleston in the State of South Carolina.
2. Upon information and belief, Defendant Kevin M. Cunnane ("Cunnane") is a private citizen and resident of the County of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina.
3. The actions and events giving rise to the claims herein arose in the County of Charleston, in the State of South Carolina.

4. This Court is vested with subject matter jurisdiction with regard to this dispute by virtue of the South Carolina Constitution, Article V. § 11, as enabled through §§ 36-2-802 and 36-3-803 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.

5. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to § 15-7-30 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.

ALLEGATIONS

The Plaintiff in this case, James William Haynie is a public figure serving as mayor of the Town of Mount Pleasant in Charleston County, in the state of South Carolina ("Town"). Haynie was elected to the Mount Pleasant Town Council ("Council") in 2015 and served the town as a member of Council through November, 2017, when he was elected mayor and continues to serve the Town as mayor. The Defendant, Kevin M. Cunnane was one of nine candidates competing for four seats on Council during 2017. Cunnane was elected to Council in a special election to fill the remainder of Haynie's term on Council after Haynie was elected mayor. Prior to his election, Cunnane regularly attended public Council meetings and was a prominent figure and a vocal advocate of many issues concerning the Town.

On or about May, 2018, Cunnane engaged a constituent on Facebook stating "I can post whatsoever I want you (vulgar expletive) . . . [A]nd I will continue to do so . . . [E]specially if it pissed you off."[1] Haynie, in his official capacity, responded to the public outrage this incident created by stating "[I]t is beneath the dignity of the office in the town of Mount Pleasant, and it certainly warrants an apology, not only to the citizen but to the Mount Pleasant citizenry at large . . . [A]n elected official, no matter how emotional the issue, should not result to personal name-calling with one of their constituents." *Id.* It is

[1] https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/mount-pleasant-councilman-apologizes-after-using-vulgar-slur-in-message-to-constituent/article_f5d3ef84-b1f3-11e8-8fc7-3bedb7a7fdf5.html

opined that Haynie's public response caused Cunnane to harbor a personal grudge between himself and Haynie and was the catalyst for a pattern of continued and persistent hostility and harassment toward Haynie, both personally and professionally.

During October, 2018, Cunnane caused a disturbance at Thomas C. Cario Middle School ("Cario"). Cunnane acted "rude and belligerent" toward school administrators.[2] Although Cunnane's reasons for causing this disturbance are unclear, "[H]e suggested that political enemies were trying to smear him, adding 'If it involves juveniles, it should not be fodder for politics or the media'." *Id.* The disturbance became so heated that a Mount Pleasant Police Department school resource officer ("SRO") was summoned to deescalate the disturbance caused by Cunnane. In a police incident report ("Report") the responding SRO stated that "school officials attempted to calm Cunnane and said that if he (Cunnane) entered the school without proper permission 'he himself could possible end up in legal trouble'. . . Cunnane told school officials that he was a town official and that it could be a conflict of interest to talk to a school resource officer because he is the officer's 'boss'." *Id.* Haynie requested a copy of the Report through the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") as Haynie, as mayor, felt Cunnane as a member of Council had involved the Town through his actions as a member of Council by exercising apparent authority and invoking his standing as a member of Council during the disturbance. Haynie also had cause to be concerned about Cunnane's fitness to remain a member of Council. Upon learning of Haynie's FOIA request, Cunnane retained Attorney Jerry N. Theos of Uricchio, Howe, Krell, Jacobson, Theos & Keith, P.A. to represent his children, students at Cario. The letter from Theos stated "[T]he purpose of this letter is to place the Town on formal

[2] https://www.postandcourier.com/news/belligerent-mount-pleasant-councilman-written-up-by-police-for-middle-school-incident/article_406f93d4-7299-11e9-82a0-7378c0e57591.html

notice that if this Incident Report (the unredacted or the redacted version) is, in fact, published, released or disseminated to any third party, directly or indirectly, the Town as well as the individuals involved will be in violation of the applicable state statutes, South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure and South Carolina Rules of Court which prohibit the same . . . [A]s such, the Town and individuals involved will be subject to civil liability." The police incident report ("Report") was ultimately released to the public via FOIA requests submitted by various independent news outlets. The Town did not provide the Report to any media outlets in light of pending litigation regarding the release of the Report. It is opined that the release of this Report and Haynie's official investigation in this incident further intensified Cunnane's animosity toward Haynie.

On December 8, 2023, during a "911" memorial dedication ceremony at the Waterfront Park in Mount Pleasant, Cunnane confronted the Reverend Dr. Robinson Dewey ("Dewey"), a friend of Haynie's and member of the Lowcountry Community Chaplaincy and stated, "I can't believe you keep backing the pedophile, the mayor".

On December 26, 2023, Haynie received an email from Dewey, advising him that Cunnane had again accused Haynie of being a "pedophile". This is when Plaintiff first became aware of the false publication against made by Cunnane against Haynie.

On October 15, 2025, Haynie met with Dewey to discuss another incident involving Cunnane that occurred at the Town Hall building in Mount Pleasant. Dewey alleged that Cunnane confronted him and stated "You're always taking up for your friend Will and he is a pedophile and you're a pedophile to (sic)."

AS A FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST DEFENDANT
(Slander)

6. The Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations contained in the foregoing as if repeated herein verbatim.
7. On December 26, 2023, Plaintiff first became aware of a slanderous publication of a false statement made to a third party other than Plaintiff.
8. Plaintiff became aware of another publication made by Defendant on or about October 15, 2025.
9. The false statements implied Plaintiff is a pedophile, an accusation of criminal conduct meant to cause harm to Plaintiff's personal and professional reputation and character and was so loathsome in nature as to cause others to shun Plaintiff.
10. The Defendant's statements were made as statements of fact, not opinion, against Plaintiff.
11. The Defendant knew and was aware that these statements made against Plaintiff were factually false.
12. The Defendant's statements were made negligently with a reckless disregard for the truth.
13. The Defendant made these statements with actual malice toward Plaintiff, a public figure.
14. The Defendant made these statements to at least one person other than Plaintiff.

AS A SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST DEFENDANT
(Slander per se)

15. The Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations contained in the foregoing as if repeated herein verbatim.
16. On December 26, 2023, Plaintiff first became aware of a slanderous publication of a false statement made to a third party other than Plaintiff.
17. Plaintiff became aware of another publication made by Defendant on or about October 15, 2025.

18. The false statements implied Plaintiff is a pedophile, an accusation of criminal conduct meant to cause harm to Plaintiff's personal and professional reputation and character and was so loathsome in nature as to cause others to shun Plaintiff.
19. The Defendant's statements were made as a statement of fact, not opinion, against Plaintiff.
20. The Defendant knew and was aware that these statements made against Plaintiff were factually false.
21. The Defendant's statements were made negligently with a reckless disregard for the truth.
22. The Defendant made these statements with actual malice toward Plaintiff, a public figure.
23. The Defendant made these statements to at least one person other than Plaintiff.

AS A THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST DEFENDANT
(Recklessness)

24. The Plaintiff repeats and realleges the allegations contained in the foregoing as if repeated herein verbatim.
25. The false statements implied Plaintiff is a pedophile, an accusation of criminal conduct meant to cause harm to Plaintiff's personal and professional reputation and character and was so loathsome in nature as to cause others to shun Plaintiff.
26. The Defendant knew and was aware that these statements made against Plaintiff were factually false.
27. The Defendant's statements were made negligently with a reckless disregard for the truth.
28. The Defendant made these statements to at least one person other than Plaintiff.
29. The Defendant should have foreseen the possibility of harmful consequences of his actions toward Plaintiff and consciously chose to take the risk knowing it would cause harm to Plaintiff's personal and professional reputation.
30. A reasonable person would understand that Defendant's conduct would hurt Plaintiff.

WHEREFORE, having fully stated in its claims against Defendant as they are presently known, Plaintiff demands a trial by jury and prays the Court to enter judgement against Defendant and award Plaintiff the following.

1. Actual, consequential and special damages in an amount to be determined at trial.
2. Punitive damages for Defendant's reckless, malicious and fraudulent conduct.
3. Plaintiff's attorney costs and fees and prejudgment interest.
4. Preliminary and permanent injunctive relief including Court Orders . . .
    a. Forever prohibiting Defendant from publishing, in writing or by spoken word, any further defamatory statements from this day until the end of time; and
    b. Ordering Defendant to draft and publish a written apology and retraction which Plaintiff shall have the right to publish at Plaintiff's complete discretion to clear his name and reputation.
5. Such other relief as this Court deems fair, just and proper.

J. BROOKS DAVIS, P.C.

By: *s/ J. Brooks Davis*

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