

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF HAMPTON

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

C/A No. 2021-CP-25-00392

RENEE S. BEACH, PHILLIP BEACH,
ROBIN BEACH, SAVANNAH TUTEN,
AND SETH TUTEN,

**ORDER GRANTING PARKER'S
DEFENDANTS' MOTION FOR
CONTEMPT**

Plaintiffs,

v.

GREGORY M. PARKER, GREGORY
M. PARKER, INC. d/b/a PARKER'S
CORPORATION, BLAKE GRECO,
JASON D'CRUZ, VICKY WARD,
MAX FRATODDI, HENRY ROSADO,
AND PRIVATE INVESTIGATION
SERVICES GROUP, LLC,

Defendants.

This matter comes before the Court upon the Motion for Rule to Show Cause ("Motion") filed by Defendants Gregory M. Parker, Gregory M. Parker, Inc. d/b/a Parker's Corporation, Blake Greco, and Jason D'Cruz (collectively, the "Parker's Defendants") regarding the failure of non-party Mandy Matney ("Ms. Matney") to appear for her noticed deposition on March 27, 2026. The Parker's Defendants request that the Court hold Ms. Matney in contempt pursuant to Rule 45(e), SCRPC, and award appropriate sanctions, including reasonable expenses and attorneys' fees.¹

¹ The Parker's Defendants also sought an order compelling Ms. Matney to attend a deposition and an extension of time within which to complete discovery. Ms. Matney was deposed on April 8, 2026.

On April 1, 2026, after the Motion was fully briefed, the Court scheduled an evidentiary hearing for April 7, 2026, and required Ms. Matney to appear in person. The parties were advised to contact the Court if they had any concerns or questions regarding this matter or the hearing. At the hearing, sworn testimony was taken from Ms. Matney and attorney Mark Tinsley. After carefully considering the Motion, Ms. Matney's Response and Supplemental Response, the record, the arguments of counsel, and the testimony presented, the Court granted the Parker's Defendants' Motion for a Rule to Show Cause and ordered Ms. Matney to appear at a hearing on May 15, 2026 for her to show cause, if she could, as to why she should not be held in contempt.

At the May 15, 2026 hearing, Ms. Matney testified and presented evidence as to why she should not be held in contempt. At the end of the day, the May 15th hearing was recessed and continued on June 22, 2026, with Ms. Matney's cross-examination and the testimony of two witnesses: attorney Eric Bland, and Ms. Matney's husband, David Moses. At the end of the hearing, the Court took the matter under advisement.

BACKGROUND/PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On October 17, 2025, the Parker's Defendants served Ms. Matney with a subpoena duces tecum which noticed her for a deposition for October 29, 2025, at a law firm in Bluffton, South Carolina.
2. After Ms. Matney objected, on November 5, 2025, the Parker's Defendants noticed another deposition at the same location for November 17, 2025.
3. On November 12, 2025, Ms. Matney filed a Motion to Quash or, alternatively, for a Protective Order. Ms. Matney argued that she was shielded by the Reporter's Privilege, codified in S.C. Code Ann. § 19-11-100; the deposition was an undue burden under Rule 45(c)(3)(A)(iv),

SCRCF; and her testimony lacked relevance. She did not raise any concerns with location of the noticed deposition.

4. On November 25, 2025, Ms. Matney filed an affidavit in which she averred that she moved to quash the subpoena because she was not available on the requested date; her testimony would require her to divulge information protected by the Reporter's Privilege; and the subpoena imposed an undue burden on her. She explained that she and her husband produce two weekly podcasts and are Executive Producers on a Hulu series which required travel, and any interruption would negatively affect her household finances. She also averred that she did not have any relevant information in this case and the deposition was part of the Parker's Defendants' goal to harass and humiliate her.

5. The Court held a hearing on November 26, 2025, and took the motion under advisement.

6. On February 5, 2026, the Court denied Ms. Matney's Motion to Quash and her alternative Motion for a Protective Order. The Court concluded that the Reporter's Privilege did not provide blanket protection from being deposed; Ms. Matney's testimony was relevant; and she had failed to establish an undue burden. (Form 4 Order filed Feb. 5, 2026.)

7. On February 10, 2026, counsel for the Parker's Defendants emailed counsel for Ms. Matney a subpoena for her deposition on March 2, 2026, again listing the same location as noticed in the previous subpoenas.

8. On February 17, 2026, Ms. Matney filed a Motion to Reconsider. Ms. Matney again argued that she was entitled to protection under the Report's Privilege; the deposition would impose an undue burden; and that she was subject to unusual harassment related to this litigation. She again did not raise any concerns with location of the noticed deposition.

9. On February 18, 2026, counsel for Ms. Matney responded to the February 10th email confirming acceptance of the Second Subpoena and raised no objection as to the location listed in the Second Subpoena. Counsel indicated she was not available on March 2, 2026, or certain other dates in March but she identified no conflict with the week of March 23, 2026.

10. On February 19, 2026, counsel for the Parker's Defendants agreed to change the deposition date to March 23, 2026. Accordingly, on February 24, 2026, counsel for the Parker's Defendants served another subpoena that amended the date to March 23rd, listing the same location as the previous subpoenas.

11. On March 8, 2026, counsel for Ms. Matney informed the Parker's Defendant that because her motion to reconsider remained pending, she did not intend to appear for a deposition on March 23, 2026. Again, counsel raised no objection to the noticed location.

12. On March 11, 2026, Ms. Matney's counsel requested that no deposition date be scheduled until the Court ruled on her pending motion to reconsider. Counsel further indicated that she was unavailable on March 23, 2026, due to a federal court hearing that had just been scheduled but was available on March 27, 2026. Again, counsel for Ms. Matney raised no objection as to the location listed in all of the subpoenas to date.

13. On March 12, 2026, the Court's law clerk asked the parties to provide the Court with a scheduling agreement outlining the selected date that the deposition would occur. The next day, counsel for the Parker's Defendants sent a proposed scheduling agreement to Ms. Matney's counsel. Counsel for the Parker's Defendants also offered to conduct the deposition at either the Bluffton location previously identified in all of the subpoenas or the law office of Maynard Nexsen in Columbia, South Carolina.

14. On March 16, 2026, the Court denied Ms. Matney's Motion for Reconsideration, finding that she failed to present any newly discovered evidence, manifest errors of law or fact, or an intervening change in controlling law that would warrant relief under Rule 59(e), SCRCP. (Form 4 Order filed March 16, 2026.) The Court ordered that she be deposed within fourteen days from the entry of the Order. (*Id.* at 1.) On March 17, 2026, the Parker's Defendants noticed Ms. Matney's deposition for March 27, 2026, at the same location in Bluffton as the previous subpoenas.

15. On March 19, 2026, having not heard from Ms. Matney's counsel, the Parker's Defendants' counsel contacted Ms. Matney's counsel to confirm March 27th as the date for the deposition, as had been previously agreed. The next day, on March 20, 2026, Ms. Matney's counsel responded by stating that Ms. Matney would not appear at the noticed location and would only agree to be deposed at another location in Bluffton, the office of her lawyer, Meredith Bannon. Ms. Matney claimed, through counsel, that she felt unsafe at the noticed location, a known and well-regarded law firm in Bluffton. March 20, 2026—less than a week before her deposition was scheduled to occur—was the first time Ms. Matney, through her counsel, objected to the location that had been identified for months.

16. On March 21, 2026, the Parker's Defendants responded and offered to move the deposition to the Maynard Nexsen law firm in Columbia, which is located in a building with security, or a hotel conference room in Bluffton. Ms. Matney rejected both of these alternate locations and insisted that she be deposed at Ms. Bannon's law firm. Ms. Matney also insisted that her husband, a non-party, be allowed to attend her deposition. Ms. Matney failed to offer a location

suitable to the Parker's Defendants, so the Parker's Defendants insisted that she appear at the place and time noticed in the subpoena.²

17. On March 25, 2026, less than 36 hours before the scheduled deposition, Ms. Matney filed an Emergency Motion to Set Deposition Location. The Parker's Defendants filed a response opposing the Emergency Motion on March 26, 2026.

18. On March 27th, at the scheduled time, Ms. Matney did not appear at the deposition at the noticed location in Bluffton. Instead, she informed the Parker's Defendants via Zoom that she was located at the Bannon Law Firm in Bluffton and there she would remain, alongside her husband, as well as Plaintiffs' counsel who also appeared at the office of the Bannon Law Firm in Bluffton. Counsel for the Parker's Defendants informed Ms. Matney that they would remain at the noticed location until 11:00 a.m., and that if Ms. Matney did not appear, they would pursue all remedies available. Ms. Matney and her counsel, along with Plaintiffs' counsel, elected to remain at the other location and not appear at the noticed location.

19. At 3:00 p.m. on March 27, 2026, Ms. Matney filed a Status Update on Emergency Motion to Set Deposition Location wherein she relayed that she had "appeared at the deposition location [she] had arranged" with private security and waited until noon. Ms. Matney's social media posts from later that same day³ included pictures of her eating lemon pound cake with Plaintiffs' lead counsel after the attempted deposition was adjourned and toasting herself with a

² Ms. Matney did not offer a location for her deposition at any place other than the Bannon Law Firm in Bluffton prior to her failure to appear at noticed location on March 27, 2026. After the Parker's Defendants filed their Motion for Rule to Show Cause, Ms. Matney ultimately offered to appear at other locations outside the Bluffton area: (1) the law office of her podcaster collaborator, Mr. Bland, in Lexington, South Carolina; (2) Ms. Lindhal's office in Charlotte; (3) the Beaufort County courthouse; or (4) the other Bannon law firm locations in the Savannah and Charleston areas. (Matney's Resp. to RTSC Ex. 1 at 2–3.)

³ These social media posts were absent from Ms. Matney's Status Update but attached as exhibits to filings submitted by the Parker's Defendants.

beverage at an outdoor location. She also posted pictures of herself, her counsel, and her husband having what appears to be a celebratory meal outing in Savannah. The Court observes that Ms. Matney's posts memorializing these activities evidence her intent to defy her obligation to appear at the noticed deposition location.

20. In a Form 4 Order filed on March 30, 2026, the Court denied Ms. Matney's "Emergency" Motion, explaining that emergency motions are "generally disfavored" and that emergency relief is not to be provided to the dilatory.⁴ The Court noted that "[t]he parties have had *nearly five months* since the first notice of this deposition to agree on a location, and Ms. Matney sought to raise this issue *less than one week* prior to the scheduled deposition."

21. On March 30, 2026, the Parker's Defendants filed the instant Motion for a Rule to Show Cause ("RTSC") seeking to hold Ms. Matney in contempt and compelling her attendance at an in-person, videotaped deposition.

22. On April 4, 2026, Ms. Matney filed a response opposing the Motion, and an affidavit from her podcast co-host Elizabeth Farrell on April 6, 2026.

23. As noted above, on April 7, 2026, the Court conducted a hearing at which testimony was taken, including from Ms. Matney, who testified that she made the decision not to go to the noticed deposition location and that she was not physically unable to appear there. The Court directed that Ms. Matney appear the following day for an in-person deposition at the Spartanburg County Courthouse.⁵

24. On April 8, 2026, Ms. Matney sat for an in-person, videotaped deposition at the Spartanburg County Courthouse, as directed by the Court.

⁴ The Order was not docketed until March 30, 2026.

⁵ The Court also rejected Ms. Matney's request that her husband (the co-owner of her media business) be allowed to attend her deposition.

25. On April 30, 2026, the Court granted the Parker's Defendants Motion for a Rule to Show Cause and ordered Ms. Matney to appear on May 15, 2026, to show cause, if she could, as to why she should not be held in contempt for willfully failing to comply with a duly issued subpoena requiring her to appear for a deposition on March 27, 2026, at the noticed location, and the March 16, 2026 Order of the Court.

26. On May 13, 2026, Ms. Matney filed an Objection to Non-sworn Contempt Motion, in which she objected to the contempt motion "being heard at all" on May 15th, arguing that the Parker's Defendants' contempt petition was not verified or accompanied by an affidavit, which she contended to be a fatal defect that could not be cured. The Parker's Defendants responded, citing *State v. Nathans*, 49 S.C. 199, 27 S.E. 52, 57 (1897) for the proposition that the affidavit requirement can be waived or met through substantial compliance. At the end of the hearing on June 22, 2026, the Court ruled from the bench that it had issued the RTSC based on Ms. Matney's sworn testimony at the April 7, 2026 hearing, where she acknowledged that she did not attend the deposition at the noticed location. As the Court held in *Nathans*, there was no risk of any false allegations of conduct being used to support the issuance of an RTSC. Additionally, Ms. Matney waived this issue as she failed to raise it during the April 7th hearing during which the Court noted that the hearing was to determine if an RTSC should issue.

27. A hearing was held on May 15, 2026, and continued on June 22, 2026, during which Ms. Matney presented evidence and witnesses, and the Court took the matter under advisement.

LEGAL STANDARD

"The power to punish for contempt[] is inherent in all courts." *Miller v. Miller*, 375 S.C. 443, 453, 652 S.E.2d 754, 759 (Ct. App. 2007) (quoting *In re Terry*, 128 U.S. 289, 303 (1888)). The trial court's power includes the ability to maintain order and decorum of the court. The power

“is essential to . . . the enforcement of the judgments, orders and writs of the courts; and consequently to the due administration of justice.” *Id.* (quoting *In re Terry*, 128 U.S. at 303). “Without such power . . . the administration of the law would be in continual danger of being thwarted by the lawless.” *Id.* at 453–54, 652 S.E.2d at 759 (citing *In re Terry*, 128 U.S. at 303).

“Contempt results from the willful disobedience of an order of the court.” *Bigham v. Bigham*, 264 S.C. 101, 104, 212 S.E.2d 594, 596 (1975). “A willful act is one which is ‘done voluntarily and intentionally with the specific intent to do something the law forbids, or with the specific intent to fail to do something the law requires to be done’” *Miller*, 375 S.C. at 454, 652 S.E.2d at 759–60 (quoting *Widman v. Widman*, 348 S.C. 97, 119, 557 S.E.2d 693, 705 (Ct. App. 2001)). “Failure by any person without adequate excuse to obey a subpoena served upon that person may be deemed a contempt of the court from which the subpoena issued.” Rule 45(e), SCRCP.

“Civil contempt must be proven by clear and convincing evidence.” *Poston v. Poston*, 331 S.C. 106, 113, 502 S.E.2d 86, 89 (1998). “Once the moving party has made out a prima facie case, the burden then shifts to the respondent to establish his or her defense and inability to comply with the order.” *Widman*, 348 S.C. at 120, 557 S.E.2d at 705. “The determination of contempt ordinarily rests within the sound discretion of the [circuit court].” *Ex parte Kent*, 379 S.C. 633, 637, 666 S.E.2d 921, 923 (Ct. App. 2008).

“Courts, by exercising their contempt power, can award attorney’s fees under a compensatory contempt theory.” *Miller*, 375 S.C. at 463, 652 S.E.2d at 764.

In a civil contempt proceeding, a contemnor may be required to reimburse a complainant for the costs he incurred in enforcing the court’s prior order, including reasonable attorney’s fees. The award of attorney’s fees is not a punishment but an indemnification to the party who instituted the contempt proceeding. Thus, the court is not required to provide the contemnor with an opportunity to purge himself of these attorney’s fees in order to hold him in civil contempt.

Matter of Est. of Combis, 439 S.C. 485, 497, 888 S.E.2d 1, 7 (Ct. App. 2023) (quoting *Poston*, 331 S.C. at 114, 502 S.E.2d at 90).

ANALYSIS

“Courts have no more important function to perform in the administration of justice than to ensure their orders are obeyed. The appellate courts of this state have zealously defended the right of trial courts to vindicate their authority by way of contempt.” *State v. Bevilacqua*, 316 S.C. 122, 128, 447 S.E.2d 213, 216 (Ct. App. 1994). The Court must maintain order and decorum, *Stone v. Reddix-Smallis*, 295 S.C. 514, 516, 369 S.E.2d 840, 841 (1988), and the power of contempt is essential to the enforcement of orders and to ensure the administration of justice, *Benedict v. Benedict*, 280 S.C. 508, 313 S.E.2d 56 (Ct. App. 1984). “Without such power . . . the administration of the law would be in continual danger of being thwarted by the lawless.” *Miller*, 375 S.C. at 453–54, 652 S.E.2d at 759 (quoting *In re Terry*, 128 U.S. at 303).

1. Ms. Matney was required by a valid subpoena to be deposed on March 27, 2026, at the noticed location and within the time limit set by the March 26, 2026 Order.

Within certain parameters, “[t]he Rules generally permit the party noticing the deposition to pick the deposition location.” *Solais v. Vesuvio’s II Pizza & Grill, Inc.*, No. 1:15CV227, 2015 WL 6110859, at *9 (M.D.N.C. Oct. 16, 2015) (citing Fed. R. Civ. P. 30(b)(1) (“A party who wants to depose a person by oral questions must give reasonable written notice to every other party. The notice must state the time and place of the deposition . . . ”)).⁶ If a deponent wishes to be deposed at a different location, it is incumbent upon her to secure either an agreement with the noticing

⁶ In the absence of state precedent, South Carolina courts look to federal interpretations of similar procedural rules for persuasive guidance. *Maybank v. BB&T Corp.*, 416 S.C. 541, 565, 787 S.E.2d 498, 510 (2016) (“In construing the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, our Court looks for guidance to cases interpreting the federal rules.”).

party or seek a protective order from the court requiring that the deposition be held in a different location. *See James v. S.C. Dep't of Transp.*, 393 S.C. 440, 450, 711 S.E.2d 919, 925 (Ct. App. 2011) (holding expert witness was required to appear in South Carolina for deposition absent agreement or court order overriding location requirement).

The Parker's Defendants, as the noticing party, chose a law firm in Bluffton—the same location which was noticed in the first subpoena served on Ms. Matney on October 17, 2025, and in every subsequent subpoena.⁷ Further, it is undisputed that no order of this Court stayed, modified, or excused Ms. Matney's obligation to appear for her deposition at the noticed location on March 27th. At the April 7, 2026 hearing, Ms. Matney testified that she received and understood the Court's Orders denying her Motion to Quash and Motion to Reconsider and understood that, as a result, she was required to sit for a deposition at the noticed location. (April 7, 2026 Hr'g Tr. 12:7–13:21.)

Ms. Matney did not raise any objection to the deposition location in her original Motion to Quash or her Motion to Reconsider, and she acknowledged that, in her earlier affidavit, she did not identify any safety concerns about the noticed location as a basis for relief. (*Id.* 11:23–12:3.) It was not until March 20th, four days after her Motion for Reconsideration had been denied and less than one week before the scheduled deposition, that Ms. Matney for the first time raised any issue to the Parker's Defendants with the noticed location and demanded that the deposition be moved to a location of her choosing citing safety concerns. (Parker's Defs.' RTSC Mot. Ex. F – March 30, 2026 Letter from Ms. Matney's counsel.)⁸

⁷ Prior to Ms. Matney raising any issues with the noticed location, the Parker's Defendants offered an alternative location in Columbia, which she declined.

⁸ In her Emergency Motion, while Ms. Matney argued that her primary concern was security due to “persistent harassment,” she also raised an issue with the size of the noticed location and that it had only one bathroom. (Matney's Emergency Mot. at 4–5.) Ms. Matney subsequently argued that

On March 26th, Ms. Matney filed an Emergency Motion to Set Deposition Location. Notwithstanding the absence of any such order and her understanding that the prior orders required her to sit for the noticed deposition, Ms. Matney testified that she believed she was not required to appear at the noticed location because she had filed this Emergency Motion. (April 7, 2026 Hr’g Tr. 15:19–24, 18:13–19, 38:8–16.)⁹ However, as noted above, if a deponent wishes to be deposed at a different location, she must obtain either an agreement with the noticing party or a protective order from the court changing the deposition location. *See James*, 393 S.C. at 450, 711 S.E.2d at 925. Filing a motion is not an agreement or a court order and does not relieve a deponent of her obligation to abide by a lawful subpoena. Any other rule would allow deponents to evade being deposed by simply filing a motion at the eleventh hour. Thus, the pendency of Ms. Matney’s Emergency Motion did not excuse her from complying with the subpoena and March 26, 2026 Court Order.

Moreover, as the Court noted in its Order denying her Emergency Motion, Ms. Matney had five months to raise any issue with the noticed location, and her delay in raising the issue with the Court did not create an emergency. Ms. Matney argues that she did not raise the issue sooner because, until the Motion for Reconsideration was denied, it was unsettled as to whether she would have to be deposed at all. (Matney’s Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt at 2, 7–8.) But Ms. Matney did not seek merely to quash the deposition in her prior motions; she raised numerous

her concern was that the bathroom was shared and open to anyone and, thus, presented a reasonable security risk. (Matney’s Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt at 12 n.7.) Mr. Tinsley, however, testified at the April 7th hearing that the bathroom was locked and required a code. (April 7, 2026 Hr’g Tr. 100:16–18.) In any event, the Court finds that Ms. Matney’s stated concerns regarding the size of the noticed location and its bathrooms do not constitute good cause for her failure to appear for the noticed deposition.

⁹ The Court notes that it is troubled by Ms. Matney’s counsel’s tolerance and facilitation of her decision to disobey the subpoena and the Court’s Order.

other issues to the Court and sought relief that would only be necessary if she were to be deposed, including that the date of the deposition accommodate her work schedule and that the length and topics of the deposition be limited.

Ms. Matney argues that she has not acted with bad purpose either to disobey or disregard the law, which is necessary to support the finding of contempt. “Where a contemnor is unable, without fault on his part, to obey an order of the court, he is not to be held in contempt.” *Smith-Cooper v. Cooper*, 344 S.C. 289, 301, 543 S.E.2d 271, 277 (Ct. App. 2001). In *Smith-Cooper*, the court addressed a commonly recognized principle that a person cannot be held in contempt of court where he is financially unable to comply with a court-ordered support obligation. Where an order requires something that is impossible for a person to follow, the failure to adhere is not contemptuous behavior. *Id.* The inquiry in determining a willful act for contempt purposes is whether the party has a true choice as to whether to comply with the order. *See In re Brown*, 333 S.C. 414, 420, 511 S.E.2d 351, 355 (1998). Contumacious behavior which tends to bring the authority and administration of the law into disrespect may also support a finding of contempt. *Stone*, 295 S.C. at 516, 369 S.E.2d at 840.

When asked directly whether she decided not to go to the noticed location, Ms. Matney answered affirmatively. (April 7, 2026 Hr’g Tr. 52:9–19.) Attending the deposition at the noticed location was not impossible. Ms. Matney had a true choice. Ms. Matney had the ability to appear for the deposition at the noticed location and she and her counsel chose to appear at a different location willfully and refused to attend the deposition at the noticed location.¹⁰ Based upon the foregoing, there is clear and convincing evidence that Ms. Matney’s failure to appear was not the

¹⁰ Ms. Matney testified that she had access to transportation, was physically able to attend the deposition, and was neither hospitalized nor physically unable to travel. (April 7, 2026 Hr’g Tr. 20:11–21, 21:3–5.)

result of confusion, mistake, or inability, but rather was a deliberate decision to disregard the subpoena and the Court's March 16, 2026 Order requiring that she be deposed within 14 days.

2. Ms. Matney has failed to establish a valid defense or inability to comply with the Subpoena and March 16, 2026 Order.

Having determined that there is clear and convincing evidence establishing contempt, the Court must now determine if Ms. Matney has a valid defense or was unable to comply with the subpoena and March 16, 2026 Order. *Widman*, 348 S.C. at 120, 557 S.E.2d at 705 ("Once the moving party has made out a prima facie case, the burden then shifts to the respondent to establish his or her defense and inability to comply with the order."). Notwithstanding her delay in raising the issue, the Court must consider Ms. Matney's stated justification for her failure to appear—*i.e.*, her assertion that she did not feel safe at the noticed location—to determine if she can establish that she had cause not to appear for her deposition.

Ms. Matney's asserted safety concerns were based primarily on the alleged online harassment by one individual, James Seidel, who Ms. Matney described as a stalker and a convicted felon. (Matney's Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt at 13.)¹¹ Ms. Matney argued that his "social media obsession is subjectively extremely concerning" to her and her husband. (*Id.* at 15.)

Reviewing the examples Ms. Matney filed with the Court, Mr. Seidel's online conduct involved critical comments and what can best be described as mocking or taunting directed at Ms. Matney. (Matney's Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt, Ex. 13.) However, none of the posts filed with the Court concerning Mr. Seidel contained any physical threats towards her. Further,

¹¹ The Court notes that Mr. Seidel was not convicted of a violent offense. He pleaded guilty to misusing federal loan money during the COVID-19 pandemic and was sentenced to a five-year probationary term.

there is no evidence in the record that Mr. Seidel's purported harassment has been the subject of any criminal prosecution or civil litigation. At the April 7th hearing, Ms. Matney testified that, prior to March 27th, she had not filed a police report or obtained a restraining order against Mr. Seidel. (April 7, 2026 Hr'g Tr. 47:2–10.) Ms. Matney testified she was in the process of taking out a restraining order against him. (*Id.*) However, at the June 22, 2026 hearing, Ms. Matney acknowledged that she had not yet sought or obtained such an order against Mr. Seidel.

While she argued in her Emergency Motion that she has online harassers who show up at public appearances and court proceeding and send her mail and text messages, at the June 22nd hearing, Ms. Matney acknowledged that the alleged harassment by Mr. Seidel has been entirely online and Mr. Seidel has not attempted to contact her directly or in person. At this hearing, Mr. Bland likewise testified that he was not aware of Mr. Seidel making any physical threats to Ms. Matney. Ms. Matney has also argued that the Parker's Defendants had connections with Mr. Seidel and were disclosing information to him about the deposition which contributed to her fear for her safety at the noticed location. (Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt at 14.) But Ms. Matney relies solely on information and belief and "well-sourced rumors," as there is no persuasive evidence in the record to support her assertion. (*Id.*)

As for the noticed location, Ms. Matney was unable to articulate any specific, concrete safety threat unique to the noticed location that would excuse compliance with the subpoena. At the April 7th hearing, Ms. Matney testified that she was scared of going to the noticed location because she does not trust a lot of people and she felt like the deposition at the noticed location was a "trap." (April 7, 2026 Hr'g Tr. 34:13–18, 77:13–19.) She further testified that if the deposition took place at the noticed location, she would have made sure the entry was secure and brought her security guard to make sure nobody was hiding nearby. (*Id.* 76:23–77:12.) Thus,

nothing prevented her from taking these security measures at the noticed location. As she subsequently acknowledged, the security guard that she hired for the deposition could have accompanied her to the noticed location (*id.* 32:16–19, 77:10–12), and he presumably would have secured the location as Ms. Matney desired.¹²

Additionally, Ms. Matney’s posts on social media, which were entered into evidence at the April 7th hearing, are inconsistent with her argument that she did not appear because she believed that she would be in imminent danger at the noticed location. Ms. Matney has posted that she does not think the Parker’s Defendants have the right to depose her and she is fighting back. She has expressed her defiance for the Court and its orders, characterizing the denial of her Motion to Quash as “bullsh**.” She posted that she would rather go to jail than sit in the same room as counsel for the Parker’s Defendants for this deposition. After refusing to appear for her deposition, she made posts celebrating that she stood her ground and that the deposition did not take place.¹³

While she may have been more comfortable at her desired location, her attorney’s office, the Court finds Ms. Matney’s testimony that she feared for her safety to such an extent that she

¹² The Court further observes that the Parker’s Defendants offered to conduct the deposition at the Maynard Nexsen office in Columbia, which would have provided the security Ms. Matney desired, as it is located on the 7th floor of a bank building with limited access and security guards. (Matney’s Emergency Mot. at 4.) Ms. Matney declined, arguing that she should not have to travel to Columbia, despite subsequently offering Eric Bland’s office in the Columbia / Lexington, South Carolina area or her counsel’s office in Charlotte, North Carolina, as alternatives after this RTSC Motion was filed. (Matney’s Resp. to RTSC Mot. at 10 & Ex. 10.) Prior to the deposition, the Parker’s Defendants also offered to conduct the deposition at a hotel in Bluffton and split the costs. (Matney’s Emergency Mot. at 4.) Ms. Matney, however, insisted on the location she had unilaterally chosen in Bluffton.

¹³ To be clear, Ms. Matney generally has a First Amendment right to state her opinions about this case, the parties, and the Court on social media and during her podcasts and those posts do not form the basis for the Court’s finding of contempt. However, the First Amendment does not preclude the Court from considering these posts which have been attached to pleadings or otherwise appropriately before this Court when assessing Ms. Matney’s credibility and whether she had just cause for her willful failure to appear at the noticed location.

could not attend a deposition at the noticed location, a law firm in Bluffton, with a security guard, and surrounded by her attorneys, is not credible. Moreover, there is no persuasive evidence in the record to support Ms. Matney's repeated assertions that the Parker's Defendants and their attorneys pursued her deposition to harass and bully her.

Finally, Ms. Matney has stressed in filings and during hearings that she is a non-party who has nothing to do with this case. She has repeatedly represented to the Court that she has no relevant information related to this litigation, except for reporting on it, and that the Parker's Defendants and their attorneys are using her deposition and this contempt proceeding to harass or punish her for her reporting on the Murdaugh case and to silence her. (*See, e.g.*, Matney's Obj. & Br. Opp. Mot. for Civil Contempt at 19; Matney's Reply to Opp. to Emergency Mot. at 3, 16 n.10, 22; April 7, 2026 Hr'g Tr. 43:7–9.)¹⁴ However, these assertions lack evidentiary support. And, in denying Ms. Matney's Motion to Quash and her Motion for Reconsideration, the Court already determined that Ms. Matney's deposition testimony was relevant and the deposition was to proceed. Depositions are a normal part of the civil discovery process and, again, there is no persuasive evidence before this Court which would support Ms. Matney's allegations that she is being harassed or unjustly treated by the Parker's Defendants or their counsel.

Importantly, this contempt proceeding arose from Ms. Matney's own conduct. Had she appeared for her deposition at the noticed location on March 27th or accepted the alternative

¹⁴ Ms. Matney has repeated this narrative on her podcasts and on social media, attacking the Parker's Defendants' attorneys and, occasionally, the Court itself. Chief Justice John Kittredge recently noted the issue facing the judiciary of "half-truths and false narratives that circulate on social media, podcasts, and other outlets masquerading as journalism, attacking . . . our justice system," and observed that ethical restraints prohibit judges from responding "no matter how false or outrageous the allegation may be." (April 15, 2026 State of the Judiciary Address Tr. 6:10–6:50.) However, when the same narratives are presented to the Court and entered into evidence, as has been done here, the Court has a duty to assess their validity—and it has done so to the extent appropriate in considering and weighing all of the evidence here.

locations offered by the Parker's Defendants, she would not be before the Court on a contempt motion.

Ms. Matney's stated reason for failing to comply—that the noticed location was not sufficiently safe for her—is not supported by the evidence or any credible testimony. Moreover, as discussed above, filing an Emergency Motion, absent a stay or order granting relief, did not excuse her compliance with the subpoena or with this Court's prior orders. Accordingly, based on all of the evidence before this Court, the Court finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that Ms. Matney's failure to appear for her deposition at the noticed location on March 27, 2026, was without adequate excuse or cause and constitutes willful disobedience of both a valid subpoena and this Court's March 16, 2026 Order. The Court's conclusion is reinforced by Ms. Matney's conduct and online commentary referenced in filings and exhibits which demonstrate a lack of appropriate respect for the authority of the courts of this state.

3. Having found Ms. Matney in civil contempt, the Court orders her to reimburse the Parker's Defendants for the costs they incurred in enforcing the subpoena and the Court's prior order, including reasonable attorney's fees.

The Court finds Ms. Matney's Motion to Quash, although denied, was filed as a matter of right. However, as made clear by the Court's Order denying her Motion to Quash (as well as the Court's rulings on her subsequent motions referenced herein), all of Ms. Matney's follow-on filings lacked merit and the Parker's Defendants prevailed on all of them.

More specifically, a motion for reconsideration is an extraordinary remedy that is not intended to provide a dissatisfied litigant with a second opportunity to relitigate issues already decided by the Court. Rather, reconsideration is generally appropriate only where there has been an intervening change in controlling law, newly discovered evidence, or a clear error of law resulting in manifest injustice. Ms. Matney's Motion for Reconsideration satisfied none of these

standards. Instead, her request for reconsideration merely recycled arguments previously rejected by the Court. Similarly, her Motion for Emergency Relief was unsupported by any genuine emergency. The alleged circumstances either were created by her own conduct or were known well before the filing of the motion. Courts consistently reject attempts to manufacture “emergency” circumstances in order to obtain expedited review or evade compliance with court orders. *See, e.g., CX Reinsurance Co. Ltd. v. Johnson*, 352 F.R.D. 132, 135 & n.5 (D. Md. 2018) (criticizing defendant’s “repeated use of the word ‘emergency’”; explaining that “an emergency is a sudden and serious event or an unforeseen change in circumstances that calls for immediate action to avert, control, or remedy harm”; holding that defendant’s “Emergency Motion” was merely “a discovery complaint” (citation modified)); *Cardoza v. Bloomin’ Brands, Inc.*, 141 F. Supp. 3d 1137, 1143 (D. Nev. 2015) (“Emergency motions ‘are not intended to save the day for parties who have failed to present requests when they should have.’” (quoting *In re Intermagnetics Am., Inc.*, 101 B.R. 191, 193 (C.D. Cal. 1989))); *Allstate Ins. Co. v. Nassiri*, No. 2:08-CV-369 JCM (GWF), 2011 WL 4905639, at *1 (D. Nev. Oct. 14, 2011) (overruling objections to magistrate judge order finding emergency motion to quash subpoena was untimely when three-weeks’ notice was provided for deposition but motion to quash was filed only three business days before deposition).

Ms. Matney’s multiple motions and supporting memoranda have required the Parker’s Defendants to devote substantial time and resources responding to arguments that lack merit and have previously been adjudicated. These unnecessary filings imposed financial burdens on the Parker’s Defendants that would not have been incurred but for Ms. Matney’s conduct.

As noted above, in a civil contempt proceeding, the Court may order a contemnor to reimburse a complainant for the costs he incurred in enforcing the court’s prior order, including reasonable attorney’s fees. *Matter of Est. of Combis*, 439 S.C. at 497, 888 S.E.2d at 7. The award

of attorney's fees is not a punishment but an indemnification to the party who instituted the contempt proceeding. *Id.* The correct measure for attorney's fees awards in civil contempt cases focuses on the reasonableness of the fees sought and the benefit obtained without regard to the financial impact of the award. *Miller v. Miller*, 375 S.C. 443, 463, 652 S.E.2d 754, 764 (Ct. App. 2007). Fee awards in contempt cases serve to reimburse a party for the reasonable fees and costs incurred to enforce a court order, not to punish. *Poston v. Poston*, 331 S.C. 106, 114, 502 S.E.2d 86, 90 (1998).

Such sanctions are necessary to protect the integrity of the judicial process. The judicial system depends upon parties respecting subpoenas and utilizing motions practice in good faith. Allowing a contemnor to disrespect court orders and file legally and factually unsupported motions without consequence encourages continued abuse of the process and undermines the authority of the Court. Having found there is clear and convincing evidence establishing Ms. Matney's civil contempt, the Court orders her to reimburse the Parker's Defendants for the costs they incurred in enforcing the subpoena and the Court's prior order, including reasonable attorney's fees.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Parker's Defendants' Motion to hold Ms. Matney in contempt for willfully failing to comply with a duly issued subpoena and the Orders of this Court is **GRANTED**.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Ms. Matney shall pay the Parker's Defendants' reasonable expenses and attorney's fees and costs, incurred as a result of her willful and intentional failure to appear for the March 27, 2026 deposition, the aborted deposition, and the filing and prosecution of the Motion for Rule to Show Cause, Ms. Matney's Emergency Motion to Set the Deposition Location, Ms. Matney's Motion for Reconsideration, and preparation for and appearances at the May 15, 2026 and June 22, 2026 Contempt hearings, along with any pleadings

or correspondence related thereto. The Parker's Defendants submitted under seal three affidavits and three itemized billing statements¹⁵ related to these proceedings of such attorney fees and costs, requesting a total award of \$310,533.39. After applying the *Miller* and *Poston* factors, **this Court awards the Parkers Defendant's \$171,500.00 for attorney's fees and costs, of which \$39,900.00 is awarded to the law firm of Bannister, Wyatt, and Stalvey, LLC; \$45,950.00 is awarded to the law firm of Deborah B. Barbier, LLC; and \$85,650 is awarded to the law firm of Maynard Nexsen, PC.** This award represents a 44.7% percent reduction of the total fees and costs originally requested by the Parker's Defendants.

The Court also believes that a fine, in addition to the above-referenced costs and expenses, is necessary here to deter similar conduct in the future and to promote respect for the law. The Court therefore imposes a fine of **\$5,000.00**, with said fine due and payable within sixty days of the date of this Order.

The Court retains jurisdiction to impose such additional sanctions as may be necessary to ensure compliance with this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

[Judge's electronic signature on following page]

¹⁵ The attorney fees and cost affidavits and the itemized billing statements provided under seal to this Court came from the law firms of (1) Bannister, Wyatt, and Stalvey, LLC; (2) Deborah B. Barbier, LLC; and (3) Maynard Nexsen, PC.



Hampton Common Pleas

Case Caption: Renee S. Beach , plaintiff, et al VS Gregory M. Parker , defendant, et al

Case Number: 2021CP2500392

Type: Order/Other

It is so Ordered.

s/ R. Keith Kelly - 2165