

BEFORE THE HEARING BOARD
OF THE
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY REGISTRATION
AND
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

JAMES THOMAS ROLLINS

Attorney-Respondent,

No. 6291928.

Commission No. 2021PR00054

NOTICE OF FILING

TO: SCOTT RENFROE
COUNSEL FOR ADMINISTRATOR
A.R.D.C.
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srenfroe@iadc.org

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on JULY 28 , 2021, I will e-file the RESPONDENT'S ANSWER TO COMPLAINT by causing the original copy to be e-filed with the Clerk of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

 /s/ Samuel J. Manella
SAMUEL J. MANELLA

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In the Matter of:)	
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)	Commission No. 2021PR00054
Attorney-Respondent,)	
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ANSWER TO COMPLAINT

Now comes JAMES THOMAS ROLLINS, by his attorney, SAMUEL J. MANELLA, and for his Answer to the Complaint, states as follows:

Respondent is licensed to practice law in the State of Illinois and the Northern District of Illinois since 2007 Respondent is also licensed to practice law in the States of Missouri and Iowa and the Southern District of Illinois since 2017.

1. On or before March 2016, Respondent and attorneys Douglas Sinars (“Sinars”), Megan Slowikowski (“Slowikowski”), and James Tomaska (“Tomaska”) agreed to form a limited liability corporation to engage in the practice of law under the name “Sinars Rollins, LLC.” Sinars Rollins, LLC was to be based in Chicago and planned to concentrate its activities in the defense of companies and insurance carriers involved in asbestos-related litigation.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 1 of the Complaint.

2. Respondent agreed with his fellow shareholders that he would contribute \$100,000 in capital in exchange for a 32.5% ownership interest in the firm. Respondent’s capital contribution was to be in the form of cash or the payment of firm-related start-up expenses which would then be credited towards the capital contribution requirement.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 2 of the Complaint.

3. Over the course of several months in 2016, Respondent fabricated and submitted various purported bills, receipts or bank statements to the Sinars Rollins, LLC firm that he asked to be credited towards the satisfaction of his \$100,000 capital contribution obligation. Those documents, totaling \$81,859.39, purported to establish that Respondent had paid \$17,175 to Lyons Law Group, LLC for legal services on March 2, 2016; that Respondent had paid \$17,550 to Edward Technology for Information Technology (“IT”) services on March 21, 2016; that Respondent had paid \$18,500 to an unnamed company for servers on March 2, 2016; and that Respondent had paid \$28,634.39 to Micro Center Computers and Electronics for computer hardware on March 2, 2016.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 3 of the Complaint.

4. The purported bills, receipts and bank statements that Respondent submitted to Sinars Rollins, LLC, and that he asked to be credited towards his capital contribution, were false. Respondent had not paid \$17,175 to Lyons Law Group, LLC for legal fees related to the firm’s formation. Rather, the firm itself paid Lyons Law Group, LLC \$4,996.60 on March 21, 2016. Respondent had not paid \$18,500 for server costs nor \$17,550 to Edward Technology, the firm itself paid Edward Technology \$13,580.66 on March 24, 2016 for IT services (including server costs). Finally, Respondent had not paid \$28,634.39 to Micro Center; the actual expense was only \$18,071.81 and that amount was paid by Respondent on March 2, 2016.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in the first and second sentences of Paragraph 4 of the Complaint. Respondent neither admits nor denies the allegations contained in the third and fourth sentences of Paragraph 4 of the Complaint, due to insufficient knowledge. Respondent admits the allegations in the fifth sentence of Paragraph 4 of the Complaint.

5. Respondent knew that the purported documents relating to the claimed capital contributions were false, because he had created them using a common word-processing program, and he knew that the fabricated documents did not reflect either the amounts paid to those vendors, nor the actual circumstances of the payments made to those vendors.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 5 of the Complaint.

6. In or around May 2017, the firm's bookkeeper noticed irregularities in the documents Respondent submitted to the firm (described in paragraphs three through five, above), and asked Respondent for additional information to support his claimed capital contributions. Respondent then provided the Sinars Rollins LLC firm what purported to be two personal checks made out to "Kevin Lyons Law Group" and "Errol Janeuz" (a person affiliated with Edward Technology) in the amounts of \$17,175.00 and \$17,550.00, respectively.

ANSWER:

Respondent is without sufficient knowledge to either truthfully admit or deny "the firm's bookkeeper" noticed irregularities. Respondent denies that it was the firm's "bookkeeper" who asked for additional information. Respondent admits the remainder of Paragraph 6 of Petitioners Complaint. In furthering answering Respondent states that in and around the Summer of 2017, Sinars Rollins, LLC confronted this Respondent regarding the discrepancy. At that time Respondent admitted his wrongdoing and agreement was reached with Sinars Rollins that reduced Respondent's capital from 32.5% to 21%. The other 11.5% was distributed to the other partners. As part of this agreement Respondent was provided five years to repay the money. If Respondent repaid the missing funds sooner, he could petition Sinars Rollins, LLC to reinstate his capital. As a result of this agreement both Respondent and Sinars Rollins, LLC felt that this was a firm matter. Respondent did repay the full amount in January of 2019 and did petition Sinars Rollins, LLC to reinstate his capital in February of 2019. Respondent heard nothing from Sinars Rollins regarding the reinstatement of his capital and in April of 2019 began looking for another firm to join. It was after learning that Respondent was going to leave the firm with his business, Sinars Rollins dismissed Respondent, telling him "We know you are looking to leave the firm". At that time Respondent was also informed that Sinars Rollins was going to report his conduct from 2016 to the ARDC, two years after the agreement was reached and after the full amount of \$100,000 had been paid.

7. The purported checks that Respondent provided to Sinars Rollins, LLC were false, because the firm, and not Respondent, had already paid \$4,996.60 to Lyons Law Group, LLC on March 21, 2016 (not the \$17,175 reflected in the purported check) and \$13,580.66 to Edward Technology on March 24, 2016 (not the \$17,550 reflected in the purported check to Errol Janeuz).

ANSWER:

Respondent is without sufficient knowledge to either truthfully admit or deny "because the firm...has already paid \$4,996.60 to Lyons Law Group on March 21, 2016" and "\$13,580.66

to Edward Technology on March 24, 2016". Respondent admits the remainder of the allegation.

8. Respondent knew that the documents described in paragraphs six and seven, above, were false because he had created them himself using a computer program, and he knew that the documents did not describe the actual amounts paid by to the vendors, nor the circumstances of the actual payments.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 8 of the Complaint.

9. By reason of the conduct described above, Respondent has engaged in the following misconduct:

- a. conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation, by conduct including falsifying and submitting capital expense invoices that he knew he had not actually incurred nor paid, in violation of Rule 8.4(c) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct.

ANSWER:

Respondent admits the allegations contained in Paragraph 9a regarding the misrepresentation and denies the balance of the allegations. Respondent further states that both he and the firm believed that this was a firm matter at the time of alleged occurrence.

WHEREFORE, Attorney-Respondent respectfully requests the complaint be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ SAMUEL J. MANELLA

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