



# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

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CITY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
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DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

Monday, July 21, 2025

Ms. Rowena Jones  
1340 Poydras St., Suite 600  
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: **Sadra Hamilton VS.  
Sewerage & Water Board  
Docket Number: 9573**

Dear Ms. Jones:

Attached is the decision of the City Civil Service Commission in the above-referenced appeal.

This is to notify you that, in accordance with the rules of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Circuit, State of Louisiana, the decision for the above captioned matter is this date - 7/21/2025 - filed in the Office of the Civil Service Commission at 1340 Poydras St. Suite 900, Orleans Tower, New Orleans, Louisiana.

If you choose to appeal this decision, such appeal must conform to the deadlines established by the Commission's Rules and Article X, 12(B) of the Louisiana Constitution. Further, any such appeal shall be taken in accordance with Article 2121 et. seq. of the Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure.

For the Commission,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Doddie K. Smith".

Doddie K. Smith  
Chief, Management Services Division

cc: Ron Spooner, Interim  
Harreze Gassery  
Imtiaz A. Siddiqui  
Sadra Hamilton

file

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION  
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**

**SADRA HAMILTON,  
Appellant**

**Docket No. 9573**

**v.**

**SEWERAGE & WATER BOARD,  
Appointing Authority**

**DECISION**

Appellant, Sadra Hamilton, brings this appeal pursuant to Article X, § 8(A) of the Louisiana Constitution and this Commission's Rule II, § 4.1 seeking relief from the termination of her employment effective March 8, 2024. (Ex. HE-1). At all relevant times, Appellant had permanent status as Supervisor of Billing in the Credits and Collections Department of the Sewerage & Water Board. (Tr. at 144). A Hearing Examiner, appointed by the Commission, presided over a hearing on October 8, 2024. At this hearing, both parties had an opportunity to call witnesses and present evidence.

The undersigned Commissioners have reviewed and analyzed the entire record in this matter, including the transcript from the hearing, all exhibits submitted at the hearing, the Hearing Examiner's report dated April 22, 2025, and controlling Louisiana law.

For the reasons set forth below, Ms. Hamilton's appeal is GRANTED.

**I. FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

The Sewerage & Water Board hired Sadra Hamilton on January 31, 2011. (Ex. HE-1). The Sewerage & Water Board promoted Ms. Hamilton based on the recommendations of her superiors in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020. (Ex. Appellant-1). On March 31, 2023, the Sewerage & Water Board assigned Ms. Hamilton to work in a higher classification in the Billing Unit, supervising

other employees while her supervisor, Debra Tate, was absent for several months. (Tr. at 145). When Ms. Tate returned, the Sewerage & Water Board placed five employees under Ms. Hamilton's supervision. (Tr. at 150). Before the termination of her employment on March 8, 2024, the Sewerage & Water Board had never disciplined Ms. Hamilton. (Tr. at 144).

One of the five employees Ms. Hamilton supervised was Lanitra Neveaux, a probationary employee. Ms. Hamilton had recommended the termination of Ms. Neveaux's employment based on performance issues Ms. Neveaux exhibited during her working test period, such as sleeping at her desk, wearing slippers to work, absences, tardiness, and violation of the cell phone policy. (Tr. at 132-22, 153, 163). Several witnesses testified about Ms. Hamilton's ongoing problems with Ms. Neveaux's performance, including Jacquelyn Overton, who witnessed Ms. Neveaux sleeping at her desk, and Ms. Tate. (Tr. at 63, 132-33, 154; *See also* Ex. Appellant-3 at 12). Ms. Hamilton also described Ms. Neveaux as combative. (Tr. at 154).

On Wednesday, October 11, 2023, Ms. Hamilton, Ms. Tate, and Gabe Bordenave met with Ms. Neveaux about her performance issues. (Tr. at 155-56). Ms. Neveaux "walk[ed] out." (Tr. at 156). Later on the same day, Ms. Hamilton received text messages from an unfamiliar number, with threats such as "I HOPE YOU DIE, BITCH;" "UGLY HOE;" and "BALD HEADED BITCH." (Ex. Appellant-3 at 16-17; Tr. at 160). Ms. Hamilton reported the receipt of these threatening messages to the Sewerage & Water Board, including sending an email to Kimberly Batiste, in Human Resources, at 9:23 AM on the morning of October 12, 2023. (Ex. Appellant-3 at 15-17). Ms. Hamilton attached screenshots of the text messages and informed Ms. Batiste that she feared for her physical safety. (Ex. Appellant-3 at 15-17). Sewerage & Water Board Security ultimately informed Ms. Hamilton it was unable to determine the identity of the individual who sent the messages. (Tr. at 156-57).

On October 12, 2023, Ms. Neveaux reported to work at about 11:45 AM without explanation for her late arrival to Ms. Hamilton. (Tr. at 157-58). Consistent with Ms. Hamilton's stated fear of Ms. Neveaux, Ms. Hamilton physically moved to another desk in the large common workspace to avoid contact with Ms. Neveaux. (Tr. at 164). During the workday, Ms. Hamilton inadvertently saw a draft of a letter of resignation from Ms. Neveaux on the printer. (Tr. at 162).

At the hearing, several witnesses described the workplace. Employees in the billing department, collection department, and customer service department work in cubicles in a large room on the first floor. (Tr. at 11-12, 31). The employees in each department are grouped together. (Tr. at 12). The common workspace has four entrances/exits including the exit to the building. (Tr. at 13). Ms. Tate's desk is in the corner of the room near the hallway leading to the women's restroom. (Tr. at 106). Ms. Hamilton's assigned desk is across the room near the hallway to the elevator. (Tr. at 106).

After 3:00 PM, Ms. Neveaux clocked out at the end of one hallway from the common workspace, and then she went to the women's restroom located in another hallway. (Tr. at 90). Ms. Hamilton walked toward her regularly assigned desk. (Tr. at 89). Ms. Neveaux, who was "agitated," then proceeded across the room from Ms. Tate's desk toward Ms. Hamilton's desk, yelling and threatening Ms. Hamilton from behind. (Tr. at 18, 89-90, 106). Renee Reese testified that Ms. Neveaux was "verbally attacking" Ms. Hamilton and "actually physically trying to get to Ms. Hamilton" (Tr. at 100). Witnesses testified that Ms. Neveaux said "I'm tired of you fucking with me;" "you scary cry baby;" "bald headed hoe;" "that's why you a bald head;" "you're sick;" and "I'm not going to stop. I'm going to get her ass." (Tr. at 18, 136, 162). Other employees, including Ms. Tate, Kallen, and Norman Aguire, blocked and/or physically restrained Ms. Neveaux to prevent her from harming Ms. Hamilton. (Tr. at 20, 41). After she reached her desk,

Ms. Hamilton had her desk phone in one hand and had either a cell phone, a pen, or scissors in her other hand. (Tr. at 19, 32, 91, 132-33, 190, 199). She made stabbing motions with the second object, stating “I know you won’t come over here.” (Tr. at 19-20, 22). Another witness testified Ms. Hamilton said, “You’re not going to touch me.” (Tr. at 90). A witness called by the Sewerage & Water Board testified that Ms. Hamilton made no statements. (Tr. at 36). While blocking Ms. Neveaux, Ms. Tate told Ms. Hamilton to stop. (Tr. at 136). Security escorted Ms. Neveaux from the premises. (Tr. at 168). Ms. Hamilton remained at work. (Tr. at 168).

After an investigation, the Sewerage & Water Board terminated Ms. Hamilton’s employment for violation of the workplace violence policy. (Ex. HE-1). The Sewerage & Water Board Interim Human Resources Director testified that Ms. Hamilton used scissors to threaten another employee, creating an unsafe and volatile work environment. (Tr. at 51).

## II. ANALYSIS

### A. Legal Standard for Commission’s Review of Discipline

“Employees with the permanent status in the classified service may be disciplined only for cause expressed in writing. La. Const., Art. X, Sec. 8(A).” *Whitaker v. New Orleans Police Dep’t*, 2003-0512 (La. App. 4 Cir. 9/17/03), 863 So. 2d 572 (quoting *Stevens v. Dep’t of Police*, 2000-1682 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/9/01)). “Legal cause exists whenever an employee’s conduct impairs the efficiency of the public service in which the employee is engaged.” *Id.* “The Appointing Authority has the burden of proving the impairment.” *Id.* (citing La. Const., art. X, § 8(A)). “The appointing authority must prove its case by a preponderance of the evidence.” *Id.* “Disciplinary action against a civil service employee will be deemed arbitrary and capricious unless there is a real and substantial relationship between the improper conduct and the “efficient

operation” of the public service.”” *Id.* “It is well-settled that, in an appeal before the Commission pursuant to Article X, § 8(A) of the Louisiana Constitution, the appointing authority has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence: 1) the occurrence of the complained of activity, and 2) that the conduct complained of impaired the efficiency of the public service in which the appointing authority is engaged. *Gast v. Dep’t of Police*, 2013-0781 (La. App. 4 Cir. 3/13/14), 137 So. 3d 731, 733 (quoting *Cure v. Dep’t of Police*, 2007-0166 (La. App. 4 Cir. 8/1/07), 964 So. 2d 1093, 1094).

**1. The Appointing Authority must show the discipline was commensurate with the infraction**

The Commission has a duty to decide independently from the facts presented in the record whether the appointing authority carried its legally imposed burden of proving by a preponderance of evidence that it had good or lawful cause for disciplining the classified employee and, if so, whether such discipline was commensurate with the dereliction. *Durning v. New Orleans Police Dep’t*, 2019-0987 (La. App. 4 Cir. 3/25/20), 294 So. 3d 536, 538, *writ denied*, 2020-00697 (La. 9/29/20), 301 So. 3d 1195; *Abbott v. New Orleans Police Dep’t*, 2014-0993 (La. App. 4 Cir. 2/11/15); 165 So.3d 191, 197; *Walters v. Dept. of Police of the City of New Orleans*, 454 So. 2d 106 (La. 1984). The appointing authority has the burden of showing that the discipline was reasonable and not arbitrary or capricious. *Neely v. Dep’t of Fire*, 2021-0454 (La. App. 4 Cir. 12/1/21), 332 So. 3d 194, 207 (“[NOFD] did not demonstrate . . . that termination was reasonable discipline”); *Durning*, 294 So. 3d at 540 (“the termination . . . deemed to be arbitrary and capricious”).

**B. The Sewerage & Water Board has not Carried its Burden of Showing Cause**

The Commission makes a factual determination that based on the statements made by Ms. Neveaux to Ms. Hamilton on October 12, 2023, and the temporal proximity to the meeting about Ms. Neveaux's performance, that Ms. Neveaux sent the threatening text messages to Ms. Hamilton on October 11, 2023. The Commission also finds that Ms. Neveaux's threatening behavior was motivated by Ms. Hamilton's criticism of Ms. Neveaux's unprofessional behavior and poor work performance. Ms. Hamilton was understandably afraid of Ms. Neveaux. Although she tried to avoid contact with Ms. Neveaux, Ms. Neveaux attempted to physically harm Ms. Hamilton on October 12, 2023.

The Commission is unable to make a factual determination about the object in Ms. Hamilton's hand on October 12, 2023. Two witnesses testified Ms. Hamilton made stabbing motions with scissors. (Tr. at 19, 32). One of these witnesses previously had a romantic relationship with Ms. Hamilton's husband prior to their divorce, raising the possibility of bias. (Tr. at 191). Ms. Tate, who blocked Ms. Neveaux and instructed Ms. Hamilton to stop, testified that Ms. Hamilton had a pen with a silver tip in her hand. (Tr. at 132-33). Renee Reese and Ms. Hamilton testified that Ms. Hamilton had her cell phone in one hand. (Tr. at 91, 190, 199). However, during the investigation, Ms. Reese only mentioned the desk phone in Ms. Hamilton's hand. (Ex. SWBNO-1).

Therefore, the Sewerage & Water Board has not carried its burden of showing that Ms. Hamilton had scissors in her hand. As a result, the Sewerage & Water Board has not carried its burden of showing that Ms. Hamilton brandished a dangerous weapon under its Professional Conduct Policy or possessed a weapon under its Workplace Violence Prevention Policy.

Because Ms. Hamilton performed her job duties by observing Ms. Neveaux's workplace behavior and recommending the termination of Ms. Neveaux's employment, Ms. Hamilton was subjected to vulgar threats (both off-duty and at work) and attempted physical harm. Based on the totality of the circumstances, Ms. Hamilton's instinctive reaction based on fear for her physical safety did not rise to the level of threats and intimidation under the applicable Sewerage & Water Board policies.

Ms. Hamilton's appeal is GRANTED. The Sewerage & Water Board shall reinstate Ms. Hamilton with all lost wages from March 8, 2024, to date, along with all emoluments of employment.

WRITER:  
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JOHN KORN, VICE-CHAIRPERSON

CONCUR:



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[Andrew Monteverde, Commissioner \(Jul 20, 2025 08:26 CDT\)](#)

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ANDREW MONTEVERDE, COMMISSIONER

#### **DISSENT BY CHAIRPERSON RICHARDSON**

I would grant Ms. Hamilton's appeal in part and deny it in part. I would rule that the Sewerage & Water Board carried its burden of showing cause for discipline. Although placed in a difficult position by a disgruntled subordinate, Ms. Hamilton verbally responded to Ms. Neveaux's threats and made stabbing motions with an object, in violation of the workplace violence policy. A long-tenured employee with supervisory responsibilities should attempt to de-escalate a confrontation with a subordinate. Ms. Hamilton's verbal response and use of an object



to threaten Ms. Neveaux impaired the efficient operation of the Sewerage & Water Board by exposing employees to harm.

However, the penalty of termination is not commensurate with the offense, especially for an 11-year employee with no record of discipline. I would reduce the discipline to a three-day suspension, in accordance with Sewerage & Water Board progressive discipline policy for threatening a co-worker.



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Brittney Richardson, Chairperson (Jul 21, 2025 14:50 CDT)

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BRITTNEY RICHARDSON, CHAIRPERSON