VERMONT SUPREME COURT 109 State Street Montpelier VT 05609-0801 802-828-4774 www.vermontjudiciary.org



Case No.

22-AP-156

ENTRY ORDER

JUNE TERM, 2022

In re William Cobb

Original Jurisdiction Judicial Conduct Board

In the above-entitled cause, the Clerk will enter:

Respondent William W. Cobb is an attorney licensed to practice law in Vermont; he also serves as the Caledonia County Probate Judge. On May 24, 2022, the Professional Responsibility Board (PRB) filed with this Court a decision from a hearing panel of the PRB finding that respondent committed five acts of misconduct, including engaging in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice and engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation. As aggravating factors, the PRB found, among other things, that respondent committed multiple offenses, engaged in bad faith obstruction of the disciplinary proceeding, engaged in dishonest and deceptive practices during the disciplinary process, and refused to acknowledge the wrongful nature of his conduct. It recommended a 15-month suspension from the practice of law and a public reprimand. The Court has ordered review of this decision on its own motion.

The Judicial Conduct Board (JCB) has been provided with a copy of the PRB decision and the Court has requested that the JCB conduct an initial inquiry into the matter. See Rule 7(1) of Rules of Supreme Court for Disciplinary Control of Judges.

We conclude that the PRB decision provides sufficient evidence to show that respondent poses a substantial threat of harm to the public or to the administration of justice. See generally In re Kane, 2017 VT 48, ¶ 1, 204 Vt. 635 (mem.) (explaining that "[f]itness for [judicial] service requires not only a knowledge of the law, but also the utmost in integrity" and "[t]o maintain public confidence in the Judiciary, a judge must demonstrate honesty, candor, and the commitment to ethical principles both on and off the bench"); see also Preamble, Code of Judicial Conduct (providing that "[a]n independent, fair, and impartial judiciary is indispensable to our system of justice" and "[t]he Vermont legal system is based upon the principle that an independent, impartial, and competent judiciary, composed of persons of integrity, will interpret and apply the law that governs our society").

We therefore temporarily suspend respondent from his role as a probate judge, without loss of compensation, "pending final determination of any proceeding under [the Rules of Supreme Court for Disciplinary Control of Judges]," Rule 5(5) of the Rules of Supreme Court for Disciplinary Control of Judges.

BY THE COURT:

Paul L. Reiber, Chief Justice

Harold E. Eaton, Jr., Associate Justice

Karen R. Carroll, Associate Justice

William D. Cohen, Associate Justice

Nancy J. Waples, Associate Justice