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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

On April 16, 2025, the Third Circuit Court of Appeal reversed the Ninth Judicial District Court, Parish of Rapides in the civil action captioned “John Callis versus Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority and Angela Varnado.”

The litigation was initiated by Commissioner John Callis who filed suit as Plaintiff seeking a declaration that the Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority, or “GAEDA,” had violated the open meetings law on February 19, 2024, such that all actions taken at that meeting, including action taken to approve an employment contract for Ms. Varnado as Executive Director of GAEDA, should be declared null and void. At the February 19, 2024, meeting, GAEDA had approved the employment contract for Ms. Varnado relying on the legal advice of Ms. Tiffany Sanders that such action was proper. While the litigation has been pending, Ms. Varnado has been dutifully serving the community in the role.

Mr. Callis specifically named Ms. Varnado as a Defendant in the litigation.

The Ninth Judicial District Court, Parish of Rapides ruled that Mr. Callis had a right to proceed with his action and that the actions of GAEDA should be declared null and void. Ms. Varnado sought a suspensive appeal to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. On April 16, 2025, the Third Circuit reversed the district court and found as follows:

We find that the trial court erred in its declaration that GAEDA conducted its Monday, February 19, 2024, meeting in violation of the Open Meetings Law. By decree below, we reverse that judgment as well as the trial court’s corresponding denial of Ms. Varnado’s preemptory exception of no cause of action filed below. We enter judgment in favor of Ms. Varnado, dismissing Plaintiff’s claims against her.

Specifically, the Third Circuit found that GAEDA had complied in all respects with the Open Meetings Law and that GAEDA had not violated any laws regarding the same. A copy of the Opinion is attached hereto and made a part hereof.

**Statement of Angela Varnado:**

I have been loyal to the Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority, and, while I was disappointed that litigation was filed questioning my Employment Agreement, I am very pleased that the Courts have now determined that the board of GAEDA appropriately followed the law. It is my sincere hope that we can all find a way to put this dispute behind us and to continue working for the greater good of the citizens of this community. My heart is in public service, and I will continue to wake up every day and do my best for our community.

Ms. Varnado was represented by Ms. Allison A. Jones and Mr. Marcus D. Sandifer of the law firm Downer, Jones, Marino and Wilhite, Shreveport, Louisiana.

**Statement of Ms. Allison A. Jones**

We are delighted that we were able to help Ms. Varnado in this matter. She is a true example of a public servant, and we believe that the Third Circuit Court of Appeal correctly followed the law. We are hopeful that our services contributed to a positive result for the community such that everyone can now focus on the work that needs to be done to continue to facilitate economic development for the Greater Alexandria area.

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