

BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

* * *

In the Matter of the Accusation of:

TAISCHA LYNETTE STEVENS,

Respondent.

) DRE No. H-3562 FR

) OAH No. 2025030043

FILED

NOV 06 2025

DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE
By B. Nichols

DECISION

The Proposed Decision dated September 26, 2025, of the Administrative Law Judge of the Office of Administrative Hearings, is hereby adopted as the Decision of the Real Estate Commissioner in the above-entitled matter.

Pursuant to Section 11517(c)(2) of the Government Code, the following corrections are made to the Proposed Decision.

1. On Page 12, Paragraph 6, "...by sending a certified letter to the Commissioner at the Department of Real Estate, Post Office Box 187000, Sacramento, CA 95818-7000" is corrected to: "...by sending a certified letter to the Commissioner at the Department of Real Estate, 651 Bannon Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, CA 95811".

The Decision suspends or revokes one or more real estate licenses, but the right to a restricted salesperson license is granted to Respondent.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 11521, the Department of Real Estate (the Department) may order reconsideration of this Decision on petition of any party. The party seeking reconsideration shall set forth new facts, circumstances, and evidence, or errors in law or analysis, that show(s) grounds and good cause for the Commissioner to reconsider the Decision. If new evidence is presented, the party shall specifically identify the new evidence and explain why it was not previously presented. The Department's power to order reconsideration of this Decision shall expire thirty (30) days after mailing of this Decision, or on the effective date of this Decision, whichever occurs first.

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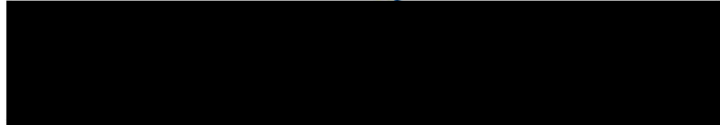
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The right to reinstatement of a revoked real estate license or to the reduction of a penalty is controlled by Section 11522 of the Government Code. A copy of Sections 11521 and 11522 and a copy of the Commissioner's Criteria of Rehabilitation are attached hereto for the information of respondent.

This Decision shall become effective at 12 o'clock noon on NOV 26 2025

IT IS SO ORDERED

Chika Sunquist
REAL ESTATE COMMISSIONER



By: Marcus L. McCarther
Chief Deputy Real Estate Commissioner

FILED

OCT 23 2025

**BEFORE THE
DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE
By *B. Nicholas*

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

TAISCHA LYNETTE STEVENS, Respondent.

Agency Case No. H-3562 FR

OAH No. 2025030043

PROPOSED DECISION

Administrative Law Judge Stephanie E. Haffner, State of California, Office of Administrative Hearings, heard this matter on August 28, 2025, by videoconference

Attorney Kyle T. Jones represented complainant Ruben Coronado, Supervising Special Investigator, Department of Real Estate.

Respondent Taischa Lynette Stevens represented herself.

The record closed and the matter was submitted for decision on August 28, 2025.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

Background and Procedural History

1. On September 28, 2009, the Department of Real Estate (Department) issued real estate salesperson license number S/01866536 to respondent Taischa Lynette Stevens. The license remained in effect until it expired on September 27, 2021. The Department renewed respondent's license on September 27, 2023. The license remains in effect and is set to expire on September 26, 2027.

2. On September 9, 2024, complainant Ruben Coronado, acting in his official capacity as Supervising Special Investigator for the Department, issued the accusation. Complainant alleges that respondent was convicted of two misdemeanor violations of driving with an elevated blood alcohol concentration. Complainant seeks to impose discipline against respondent's license and to recover the costs of investigation and enforcement of this matter. Respondent timely filed a notice of defense, and this proceeding followed.

Criminal Convictions

3. On March 27, 2023, in the Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus, respondent was convicted in case number CR-21-003320, upon her plea of no contest, of violating Vehicle Code section 23152, subdivision (b) (driving with blood alcohol concentration above 0.08 percent), a misdemeanor. Imposition of sentence was suspended, and respondent was granted 36 months of informal probation on conditions including that she serve a term of 7 days with four days of credits plus three days of good time credits, and pay various fines and fees.

4. The facts and circumstances leading to this conviction are that on January 9, 2021, respondent was arrested after being observed driving recklessly. The arresting officer noted that respondent showed signs of intoxication and failed field sobriety tests. Her blood alcohol concentration measured 0.19 percent, more than twice the legal limit.

5. Also on March 27, 2023, in the Superior Court of California, County of Stanislaus, respondent was convicted in case number CR-22-001188, upon her plea of no contest, of violating Vehicle Code section 23153, subdivision (b) (driving with blood alcohol concentration above 0.08 percent involving bodily injury), a misdemeanor. Imposition of sentence was suspended, and respondent was granted 36 months of informal probation on conditions including that she serve a term of 35 days with 19 days of credits plus 18 days of good time credits, pay various fines and fees, and pay restitution in an amount to be determined.

6. The facts and circumstances leading to this conviction are that on November 24, 2021, respondent was arrested after having rear-ended a car, whose passenger reported neck pain from the collision. The arresting officer observed that respondent showed signs of intoxication and failed field sobriety tests. Her blood alcohol concentration measured 0.15 percent and 0.14 percent.

Respondent's Evidence

7. Respondent testified with sincerity and candor. Her testimony was credible in all respects.

8. Respondent described the incidents leading to the convictions. On January 9, 2021, she had an altercation with the person with whom she had been

engaged for 13 years, and "needed to leave." While driving away, respondent was pulled over by police and arrested.

9. Respondent was arrested again on Friday, November 24, 2021. Although "not an excuse," this was her first Thanksgiving holiday apart from her family. Respondent left work, met a friend at a bar, and drank several beers on an empty stomach. Afterwards, while driving, she reached for her mobile phone and in the process, rear-ended the car in front of her.

10. Respondent had previously completed an inpatient rehabilitation program to address alcohol and mental health concerns, but she did not abstain from alcohol until November 25, 2021. She acknowledged that she caused an accident while intoxicated, which "terrified" her as to "what could have happened." Respondent stated that she has been sober ever since.

11. Respondent stopped practicing real estate in 2021 and allowed her salesperson license to expire. From March to November 2021, she obtained services from a nonprofit organization that assists survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Respondent also began mental health therapy in September 2021 with Julie S. Lenhardt, L.C.S.W. She began to attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, and in January 2022 established a relationship with her AA sponsor, Nina Kearney.

12. A licensee is allowed up to two years to renew an expired real estate license. (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 10201.) Respondent waited until the end of this two-year "grace period" before applying to the Department on September 23, 2023, to renew her license. She disclosed her convictions when she applied for renewal, and the Department renewed her license without restriction. In March 2024, respondent

affiliated with a responsible broker. However, she did not practice real estate until two weeks before the hearing when "an opportunity arose" to market and sell a home.

13. Respondent stated that she takes "full responsibility" for her criminal history and has "worked hard to meet every requirement" imposed by the court. She stated that impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic delayed sentencing and the start of probation. In February 2025, respondent completed a court-ordered 18-month multiple offender program concerning driving under the influence of alcohol. She is due to complete probation for the two convictions on March 27, 2026.

14. Respondent's therapist testified credibly at the hearing. Lenhardt stated that respondent participated in "in-depth" weekly therapy for nearly four years, with very few breaks. Lenhardt stated that respondent attained her initial treatment goals to refrain from substance abuse and to establish a recovery support network and a comprehensive relapse prevention plan. She stated that respondent has maintained nearly four years of sobriety and "continually demonstrated regular use of [her] healthy support network and skills to maintain sobriety even during stressful times." According to Lenhardt, respondent also accomplished the treatment goal to acquire and consistently practice skills and techniques for maintaining emotional stability. Lenhardt opined that respondent's diagnoses of alcohol use disorder and mild depression are in remission.

15. Currently, respondent's treatment with Lenhardt focuses on processing and managing responses to trauma and triggers, reducing symptoms that respondent experiences due to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and repairing and strengthening relationships with her children. Lenhardt observed that respondent has rebuilt "a healthy and productive life" in which she runs a business, engages in community activities, and manages day-to-day stressors.

16. Lenhardt stated that, in her opinion, respondent has "the skills to be socially integrated in all ways" including work without restriction. Lenhardt stated that respondent should "continue on her current path," which includes her recovery support network, relapse prevention plan, therapy for PTSD, and sponsor relationship.

17. Respondent's AA sponsor also testified credibly at hearing. Kearney is a retired military veteran who stated that she herself attained sobriety on June 1, 2003. Kearney has a license to provide chemical dependency counseling. She stated that her relationships in AA are peer-to-peer and separate from professional counseling.

18. Beginning in early 2022, Kearney and respondent initially met weekly and sometimes twice per week, by Zoom. Currently, they continue to meet approximately twice per month by Zoom or telephone for 90 to 100 minutes, during which they either work through one of the 12 steps or discuss a matter of concern to respondent. Kearney described respondent as a recovery "success story," and stated that respondent has demonstrated her progress in recovery by changing her attitude from blaming others to taking responsibility.

19. Respondent additionally provided a character reference letter from Amariah Richards, who currently serves as Business Development Manager for Visit Tuolumne County. Respondent purchased a business, Wild Peak Vacation Rentals, from Richards. Prior to purchasing the business, respondent worked under Richards' supervision as Operations Manager for Wild Peak. Richards described respondent as "steady" and trustworthy. She stated that she was aware of the reason for the hearing, that respondent has shown accountability, integrity, and growth, and that she believes "firmly" that respondent should be permitted to work in real estate without restriction.

20. Respondent has two children, ages 18 and 12. She has joint legal and physical custody of her 12-year-old daughter.

21. Respondent volunteers at church festivals and events, and she periodically helps with the food bank and children's events.

Costs

22. The Department incurred \$1,834.30 in investigation costs and \$554.40 in enforcement costs to prosecute this action, for a total costs claim of \$2,388.70. The above costs are supported by certifications that describe the general tasks performed, time spent on each task, and method of calculating the cost, in compliance with California Code of Regulations, title 1, section 1042, with one exception. Time records totaling 8.7 hours out of the 23.15 total investigative hours do not describe the general tasks performed in that they are described only as "Case Other." It is found that the amount of investigative costs that is legally supported corresponds with 70 percent of the \$1,834.30 in investigative costs, or \$1,284.01. Together with \$554.40 in enforcement costs, complainant incurred \$1,838.41 in legally supported costs. These costs are found to be reasonable.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

1. The burden of proof is on the Department to show cause for discipline, by clear and convincing evidence. (*Small v. Smith* (1971) 16 Cal.App.3d 450, 457; Evid. Code, § 500.) The burden is on respondent to show rehabilitation, by a preponderance of the evidence. (Evid. Code, §§ 115, 500.)

Cause for Discipline

2. The Real Estate Commissioner (Commissioner) may suspend or revoke a real estate license if the licensee has been convicted of a crime that is substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of a real estate licensee. (Bus. & Prof. Code, §§ 490, subd. (a), 10177, subd. (b)(1).) Department regulations establish that respondent's two convictions for driving with an elevated blood alcohol concentration (Factual Findings 3 to 6) are substantially related to the qualifications, functions, or duties of a real estate licensee. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 10, § 2910, subd. (a)(11).) Accordingly, cause for discipline exists under Business and Professions Code sections 490, subdivision (a), and 10177, subdivision (b)(1).

Determination of Discipline

3. The purpose of administrative proceedings regarding professional licenses is not to punish the applicant or licensee, but to protect the public. (*Hughes v. Board of Architectural Examiners* (1998) 17 Cal.4th 763, 785-786; *Griffiths v. Superior Court* (2002) 96 Cal.App.4th 757, 768.) The Legislature intends that real estate licensees will be honest, truthful, and worthy of the fiduciary obligations they will bear. (*Harrington v. Department of Real Estate* (1989) 214 Cal.App.3d 394, 402.)

4. In California Code of Regulations, title 10, section 2912, the Department has established criteria to be used in evaluating the rehabilitation of a licensee who has committed a criminal offense. These include the passage of no less than two years from the most recent offense, payment of restitution, expungement of convictions, successful completion of probation, abstinence from alcohol for no less than two years in cases involving alcohol use, payment of court fines, stability of family life, completion of educational programs, significant community involvement, and change

in attitude. Of these criteria, "arguably the most important in predicting future conduct" is whether the licensee demonstrates a change in attitude. (*Singh v. Davi* (2012) 211 Cal.App.4th 141, 149.) Moreover, "[s]ustained conduct over an extended period of time" provides persuasive evidence of rehabilitation. (*In re Menna* (1995) 11 Cal.4th 975, 991.)

5. Respondent was convicted of crimes related to driving and the abuse of alcohol more than two years ago, concerning events that occurred four years ago. There is no record of prior discipline against her license in evidence. Respondent has taken full responsibility for her actions. She has established new and different relationships through a four-year period of in-depth therapy and a nearly four-year AA sponsor relationship. She has demonstrated a change in attitude and nearly four years of observed sobriety. She has strengthened her family relationships and maintains joint legal and physical custody of her daughter. Respondent has demonstrated substantial rehabilitation since her criminal offenses.

Although respondent has shown accountability and rehabilitation, she remains on criminal probation. Upon consideration of the record as a whole, it is determined that the public interest would be protected by permitting respondent to retain her real estate salesperson license under the heightened supervision of a restricted license for a period of one year.

Costs

7. Business and Professions Code section 10106 authorizes the Department to recover its reasonable costs of investigation and enforcement in disciplinary proceedings if the licensee is found to have violated the Real Estate Law. As set forth in Legal Conclusion 2, respondent violated the Real Estate Law. As set forth in Factual

Finding 22, complainant has reasonably incurred \$1,838.41, in legally supported costs in connection with the investigation and enforcement of this matter.

8. In *Zuckerman v. State Board of Chiropractic Examiners* (2002) 29 Cal.4th 32, 45, the California Supreme Court set forth standards for determining whether costs should be assessed in the particular circumstances of each case, to ensure that licensees with potentially meritorious claims are not deterred from exercising their right to an administrative hearing. Those standards include whether the licensee has been successful at hearing in getting the charges dismissed or reduced, the licensee's good faith belief in the merits of his or her position, whether the licensee has raised a colorable challenge to the proposed discipline, the financial ability of the licensee to pay, and whether the scope of the investigation was appropriate to the alleged misconduct. In this matter, respondent has raised a colorable challenge to the proposed discipline, and the assessed costs shall be reduced to \$1,000.

ORDER

All licenses and licensing rights of respondent Taischa Lynette Stevens under the Real Estate Law are revoked; provided, however, a restricted real estate salesperson license shall be issued to respondent pursuant to section 10156.5 of the Business and Professions Code if respondent makes application therefor and pays to the Department of Real Estate the appropriate fee for the restricted license within 90 days from the effective date of this Decision. The restricted license issued to respondent shall be subject to all of the provisions of section 10156.7 of the Business and Professions Code and to the following limitations, conditions, and restrictions imposed under authority of section 10156.6 of that Code.

1. The restricted license issued to respondent may be suspended prior to hearing by Order of the Real Estate Commissioner in the event of respondent's conviction or plea of nolo contendere to a crime which is substantially related to respondent's fitness or capacity as a real estate licensee.

2. The restricted license issued to respondent may be suspended prior to hearing by Order of the Real Estate Commissioner on evidence satisfactory to the Commissioner that respondent has violated provisions of the California Real Estate Law, the Subdivided Lands Law, Regulations of the Real Estate Commissioner or conditions attaching to the restricted license.

3. Respondent shall not be eligible to apply for the issuance of an unrestricted real estate license nor for the removal of any of the conditions, limitations or restrictions of a restricted license until one year has elapsed from the effective date of this Decision.

4. Respondent shall submit with any application for license under an employing broker, or any application for transfer to a new employing broker, a statement signed by the prospective employing real estate broker on a form approved by the Department of Real Estate which shall certify:

(a) That the employing broker has read the Decision of the Commissioner which granted the right to a restricted license; and

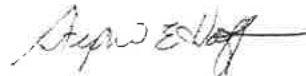
(b) That the employing broker will exercise close supervision over the performance by the restricted licensee relating to activities for which a real estate license is required.

5. Respondent shall, within nine months from the effective date of this Decision, present evidence satisfactory to the Real Estate Commissioner that respondent has, since the most recent issuance of an original or renewal real estate license, taken and successfully completed the continuing education requirements of Article 2.5 of Chapter 3 of the Real Estate Law for renewal of a real estate license. If respondent fails to satisfy this condition, the Commissioner may order the suspension of the restricted license until the respondent presents such evidence. The Commissioner shall afford respondent the opportunity for a hearing pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act to present such evidence.

6. Respondent shall notify the Commissioner in writing within 72 hours of any arrest by sending a certified letter to the Commissioner at the Department of Real Estate, Post Office Box 187000, Sacramento, CA 95818-7000. The letter shall set forth the date of respondent's arrest, the crime for which respondent was arrested and the name and address of the arresting law enforcement agency. Respondent's failure to timely file written notice shall constitute an independent violation of the terms of the restricted license and shall be grounds for the suspension or revocation of that license.

7. Respondent must pay the Department of Real Estate's costs for the investigation and enforcement of this action under Business and Professions Code section 10106, in the amount of \$1,000.00. Respondent shall be permitted to pay these costs in a payment plan approved by the Department, with payments to be completed no later than three months prior to the end of the restriction on her license.

DATE: 09/26/2025



STEPHANIE E. HAFFNER

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings