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Alameda Court Commissioner Faces Complaint Over Demeanor

Cheryl Miller, The Recorder

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SACRAMENTO — A veteran Alameda County court commissioner is facing possible expulsion from the bench amid allegations he was rude to litigants, mishandled court proceedings and made inappropriate remarks to courtroom staff.

The Commission on Judicial Performance [has charged](#) Commissioner Taylor Culver with willful misconduct, conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice and improper action. The allegations expose Culver to a finding that he is unfit to serve as a subordinate judicial officer.

The 40-page notice of formal proceedings against Culver, released Wednesday, includes 10 counts of alleged wrongdoing and dozens of instances where he is accused of being sarcastic, impatient or discourteous with litigants challenging traffic tickets.

A former civil litigator, Culver was appointed to the bench in 2005. Culver did not return an email message left Wednesday. His attorney, Arthur Harris of Murphy Pearson Bradley & Feeney in San Francisco, said Culver disputes the charges.

"And he looks forward to a full, fair and impartial hearing to respond to those allegations," Harris said.

In an April 2015 arraignment, Culver, according to the commission, got into a heated exchange with a woman facing four traffic cases. According to the CJP, Culver told the woman to keep quiet and she responded by cursing at him. The CJP described the ensuing conversation this way:

"I wish I didn't have this robe on," Culver said.

"I wish you didn't either," the woman responded. "So you're threatening me—"

"We would straighten it out," the commissioner said.

In addition to making pointed remarks to litigants, the CJP accused Culver of using a blanket

sentencing policy in certain types of cases, effectively and improperly prejudging them. In other cases, Culver presided over arraignments without informing the defendants of the charges against them, the CJP said.

Culver's formal answer to the commission's notice is due Nov. 3. His case is expected to be heard by a panel of special masters.

The CJP notice of formal proceedings is posted below.

Contact Cheryl Miller at cmiller@alm.com. On Twitter: [@CapitalAccounts](https://twitter.com/CapitalAccounts)

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