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August 2015

First Financial Credit vs. Safety

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July 31, 2015

Commissioner Bill Gibbons
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First Financial Credit
205 North 18th Street
Middlesboro, KY 40965

RE: In the Matter of: First Financial Credit (Q3021)

Docket No. 19.05-132077J

Enclosed is an Initial Order rendered in connection with the above-styled case.

Administrative Procedures Division
Tennessee Department of State

/aem
Enclosure

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER OF THE TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY**

IN THE MATTER OF:

FIRST FINANCIAL CREDIT

DOCKET NO. 19.05-132077J

NOTICE

ATTACHED IS AN INITIAL ORDER RENDERED BY AN ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION.

THE INITIAL ORDER IS NOT A FINAL ORDER BUT SHALL BECOME A FINAL ORDER UNLESS:

1. THE ENROLLEE FILES A WRITTEN APPEAL, OR EITHER PARTY FILES A PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION NO LATER THAN **August 17, 2015**.

YOU MUST FILE THE APPEAL, PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION. THE ADDRESS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION IS:

SECRETARY OF STATE
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION
WILLIAM R. SNODGRASS TOWER
312 ROSA PARKS AVENUE, 8th FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-1102

IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES DIVISION, **615/741-7008 OR 741-5042, FAX 615/741-4472**. PLEASE CONSULT APPENDIX A AFFIXED TO THE INITIAL ORDER FOR NOTICE OF APPEAL PROCEDURES.

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER OF THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT
OF SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY**

IN THE MATTER OF:

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

v.

**One 1979 Chevrolet CC1
VIN: CCD149F309278
Seized From: Dustin L. Ellison
Date of Seizure: October 15, 2014
Claimant: First Financial Credit¹
Lien Holder: First Financial Credit**

**DOCKET NO: 19.05-132077J
D.O.S. Case No. Q3021**

INITIAL ORDER AND NOTICE OF DEFAULT

This matter came for hearing in Fall Branch, Tennessee on July 7, 2015, before Steve R. Darnell, Administrative Law Judge, assigned by the Secretary of State, and sitting for the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Safety. Attorney Patrick Rice represented the Department of Safety. No one appeared on behalf of **First Financial Credit, Inc.** (Lienholder).

This was a “show cause” hearing to determine why the subject vehicle should not be forfeited to the seizing agency because Lienholder failed to take possession of the vehicle. The Department moved for an initial order holding Lienholder in default and further requested that Lienholder’s claim be stricken from the record and its interested forfeited to the seizing agency. The motion was granted based upon the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. This vehicle was seized pursuant to the law, resulting in the issuance of a property forfeiture warrant. Lienholder filed the proper paperwork to protect its lien and secure a claim to the vehicle.

¹ First Financial Credit, Inc.

2. A previous order forfeited the interest of other owners/claimants in this vehicle to the seizing agency subject to Lienholder's interest. This order provided, "if lienholder fails to take custody of the captioned vehicle on or before thirty (30) days from the date of this order, this matter shall be brought up on motion by the seizing agency for the lienholder to show cause why their interest should not be forfeited."
3. This show-cause hearing was set for Lienholder to appear and demonstrate why the forfeiture provision of the previous order should not be put into effect.
4. Lienholder was provided notice of this hearing via mail sent to Lienholder's address of record. No one appeared at the hearing on Lienholder's behalf.
5. The Department moved for an order holding Lienholder in default and that the forfeiture provisions of the previous order be enforced.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ANALYSIS

1. Department of Safety Rule 1340-2-2-.11 provides as follows:
 - (1) At a reasonable time prior to a hearing, a "Notice of Hearing" shall be filed by the Legal Division and served on all parties, per Rule 1340-2-2-.03(4).
 - (2) In serving a "Notice of Hearing," the Legal Division shall rely upon the addresses of record as given by a claimant or by claimant's counsel. Proof of service per Rule 1340-2-2-.03(4) to the addresses of record shall establish a rebuttable presumption that claimant or claimant's counsel received notice of the hearing date.
 - (3) Notice of hearing for a second or subsequent setting of the hearing will be by certified mail, return receipt requested. The return receipt card may be filed with the Legal Division and serve as a record of notification.
- (4) All claims filed against a specific seized property shall be consolidated for a single hearing.
2. Department of Safety Rule 1340-2-2-.17(1) provides, in relevant part:
 - (d) No default shall be entered against a claimant for failure to attend except upon proof, by the filing of the return receipt card, that the Legal Division has given notice of hearing.

(e) Upon default by a party, an administrative judge may enter either an initial default order or an order for an uncontested proceeding.

3. Department of Safety Rule 1340-2-2-.17(2) states, in relevant part:

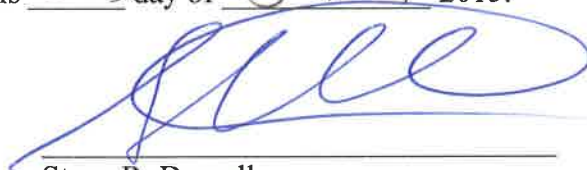
Upon a default by a claimant, a claimant's claim shall be stricken by initial default order.

4. The Commissioner's ruling regarding the proper procedure for default proceedings, as set forth in the forfeiture case *In re: Taliaferro*, Docket No. 19.05-049400J (April 12, 2004) is that the Claimant's claim be stricken.

5. The claim being stricken, it is as if no claim had ever been filed, which constructively evokes T.C.A. §40-33-206(c). That section states: "If a claim . . . is not filed with the applicable agency within the time specified . . . the seized property shall be forfeited and disposed of as provided by law."

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT the Department's motion for default is granted, Lienholder's claim is stricken, and the above described vehicle is **FORFEITED** to the seizing agency.

This Initial Order entered and effective this 31ST day of JULY 2015.



Steve R. Darnell
Administrative Law Judge

Filed in the Administrative Procedures Division, Office of the Secretary of State, this 31ST day of JULY 2015.



J. Richard Collier, Director
Administrative Procedures Division

APPENDIX A TO INITIAL ORDER
NOTICE OF APPEAL PROCEDURES

Review of Initial Order

This Initial Order shall become a Final Order (reviewable as set forth below) fifteen (15) days after the entry date of this Initial Order, unless either or both of the following actions are taken:

(1) A party files a petition for appeal to the agency, stating the basis of the appeal, or the agency on its own motion gives written notice of its intention to review the Initial Order, within fifteen (15) days after the entry date of the Initial Order. If either of these actions occurs, there is no Final Order until review by the agency and entry of a new Final Order or adoption and entry of the Initial Order, in whole or in part, as the Final Order. A petition for appeal to the agency must be filed within the proper time period with the Administrative Procedures Division of the Office of the Secretary of State, 8th Floor, William R. Snodgrass Tower, 312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243. (Telephone No. (615) 741-7008). See Tennessee Code Annotated, Section (T.C.A. §) 4-5-315, on review of initial orders by the agency.

(2) A party files a petition for reconsideration of this Initial Order, stating the specific reasons why the Initial Order was in error within fifteen (15) days after the entry date of the Initial Order. This petition must be filed with the Administrative Procedures Division at the above address. A petition for reconsideration is deemed denied if no action is taken within twenty (20) days of filing. A new fifteen (15) day period for the filing of an appeal to the agency (as set forth in paragraph (1) above) starts to run from the entry date of an order disposing of a petition for reconsideration, or from the twentieth day after filing of the petition, if no order is issued. See T.C.A. §4-5-317 on petitions for reconsideration.

A party may petition the agency for a stay of the Initial Order within seven (7) days after the entry date of the order. See T.C.A. §4-5-316.

Review of Final Order

Within fifteen (15) days after the Initial Order becomes a Final Order, a party may file a petition for reconsideration of the Final Order, in which petitioner shall state the specific reasons why the Initial Order was in error. If no action is taken within twenty (20) days of filing of the petition, it is deemed denied. See T.C.A. §4-5-317 on petitions for reconsideration.

A party may petition the agency for a stay of the Final Order within seven (7) days after the entry date of the order. See T.C.A. §4-5-316.

YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE FURTHER NOTICE OF THE INITIAL ORDER BECOMING A FINAL ORDER

A person who is aggrieved by a final decision in a contested case may seek judicial review of the Final Order by filing a petition for review in a Chancery Court having jurisdiction (generally, Davidson County Chancery Court) within sixty (60) days after the entry date of a Final Order or, if a petition for reconsideration is granted, within sixty (60) days of the entry date of the Final Order disposing of the petition. (However, the filing of a petition for reconsideration does not itself act to extend the sixty day period, if the petition is not granted.) A reviewing court also may order a stay of the Final Order upon appropriate terms. See T.C.A. §4-5-322 and §4-5-317.