

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Before the
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

INVESTMENT ADVISERS ACT OF 1940
Release No. 6590 / April 15, 2024

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDING
File No. 3-21914

In the Matter of

**WAYZATA INVESTMENT PARTNERS
LLC,**

Respondent.

**ORDER INSTITUTING
ADMINISTRATIVE AND CEASE-AND-
DESIST PROCEEDINGS PURSUANT
TO SECTIONS 203(e) AND 203(k) OF
THE INVESTMENT ADVISERS ACT
OF 1940, MAKING FINDINGS, AND
IMPOSING REMEDIAL SANCTIONS
AND A CEASE-AND-DESIST ORDER**

I.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission”) deems it appropriate and in the public interest that public administrative and cease-and-desist proceedings be, and hereby are, instituted pursuant to Sections 203(e) and 203(k) of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940 (“Advisers Act”) against Wayzata Investment Partners LLC (“Wayzata Investment Partners” or “Respondent”).

II.

In anticipation of the institution of these proceedings, Respondent has submitted an Offer of Settlement (the “Offer”) which the Commission has determined to accept. Solely for the purpose of these proceedings and any other proceedings brought by or on behalf of the Commission, or to which the Commission is a party, and without admitting or denying the findings herein, except as to the Commission’s jurisdiction over it and the subject matter of these proceedings, which are admitted, Respondent consents to the entry of this Order Instituting Administrative and Cease-and-Desist Proceedings Pursuant to Sections 203(e) and 203(k) of the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, Making Findings, and Imposing Remedial Sanctions and a Cease-and-Desist Order (“Order”), as set forth below.

III.

On the basis of this Order and Respondent's Offer, the Commission finds¹ that:

Summary

1. These proceedings involve violations of the Commission's "pay-to-play" rule for investment advisers by Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners, an investment adviser registered with the Commission. Rule 206(4)-5, promulgated under Section 206(4) of the Advisers Act, is a prophylactic rule designed to address pay-to-play abuses involving campaign contributions made by certain investment advisers or their covered associates to government officials who are in a position to influence the selection of investment advisers to manage government client assets, including the assets of public pension funds and other public entities. Among other things, Rule 206(4)-5 prohibits certain investment advisers from providing investment advisory services for compensation to a government client for two years after the adviser or certain of its executives or employees (known as covered associates) makes a campaign contribution to certain elected officials or candidates who can influence the selection of certain investment advisers.

2. In April 2022, a covered associate of Respondent made a campaign contribution to a candidate for elected office in Minnesota, which office had influence over selecting investment advisers for a state investment board in Minnesota. The state investment board had already invested in funds advised by Respondent prior to the contribution. Within two years after this contribution, Respondent provided investment advisory services for compensation to the state investment board. By providing these investment advisory services for compensation within two years after the contribution, Respondent violated Section 206(4) of the Advisers Act and Rule 206(4)-5 thereunder.

Respondent

3. Wayzata Investment Partners LLC ("Wayzata Investment Partners") is a limited liability company headquartered in Plymouth, Minnesota. Wayzata Investment Partners has been registered with the Commission as an investment adviser since May 31, 2004, was registered during the relevant time period, and reported assets under management of approximately \$644 million in its most recent ADV filing on March 30, 2023.

Background

4. Between 2007 and 2013, the Minnesota State Board of Investment ("SBI"), a state investment board in Minnesota, committed to invest, and subsequently invested, approximately \$300 million in funds advised by Wayzata Investment Partners (the "Funds"). The Funds were

¹ The findings herein are made pursuant to Respondent's Offer of Settlement and are not binding on any other person or entity in this or any other proceeding.

covered investment pools under Rule 206(4)-5 of the Advisers Act.² Specifically, in 2007, SBI committed to invest, and subsequently invested, approximately \$150 million in Wayzata Opportunity Fund II, L.P., a private equity fund advised by Wayzata Investment Partners. In 2013, SBI committed to invest, and subsequently invested, approximately \$150 million in Wayzata Opportunity Fund III, L.P., another private equity fund advised by Wayzata Investment Partners. The Funds were closed-end funds and investors were generally prohibited from withdrawing their money for the life of the funds.

5. On April 4, 2022, a covered associate³ of Respondent made a \$4,000 campaign contribution⁴ to a government official in Minnesota.

6. The office of the government official had the ability to influence the selection of investment advisers for SBI. Specifically, the government official is on the board of SBI. The SBI board has influence over investments by SBI and the selection of investment advisers and pooled investment vehicles for SBI. As of the date of the contribution in 2022, SBI had already invested in the Funds.

7. During the two years after the contribution, Respondent continued to provide investment advisory services for compensation, in the form of advisory fees and carried interest, to the Funds, and therefore, to the SBI.⁵

² Under Rule 206(4)-5(c), an investment adviser to a covered investment pool in which a government entity invests is considered to be providing investment advisory services directly to the government entity. A “covered investment pool” is defined as (i) an investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940 (“Investment Company Act”) that is an investment option of a plan or program of a government entity; or (ii) any company that would be an investment company under Section 3(a) of the Investment Company Act, but for the exclusion provided from that definition by either Section 3(c)(1), Section 3(c)(7), or Section 3(c)(11) of that Act. See Rule 206(4)-5(f)(3).

³ Covered associates are defined to include: (i) any general partner, managing member or executive officer, or other individual with a similar status or function; (ii) any employee who solicits a government entity for the investment adviser and any person who supervises, directly or indirectly, such employee; and (iii) any political action committee controlled by the investment adviser or by any of its covered associates. See Rule 206(4)-5(f)(2).

⁴ Rule 206(4)-5 has a *de minimis* exception, which permits covered associates to make aggregate contributions without triggering the two-year time out of up to \$350, per election, to an elected official or candidate for whom the covered associate is entitled to vote, and up to \$150, per election, to an elected official or candidate for whom the covered associate is not entitled to vote. See Rule 206(4)-5(b)(1).

⁵ Carried interest is a share of the profits of an investment paid to the investment manager in excess of any amount that the manager contributes to the partnership. See Commonwealth Venture Management Corp., Advisers Act Release No. 4615 (January 17, 2017) (Settled Order), 2017 SEC LEXIS 130.

8. Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5(a)(1) prohibits any investment adviser registered with the Commission, investment adviser required to be registered with the Commission, foreign private adviser, or exempt reporting adviser from providing investment advisory services for compensation to a government entity⁶ within two years after a contribution to an official⁷ of a government entity made by the investment adviser or any covered associate of the investment adviser. Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5 does not require a showing of *quid pro quo* or actual intent to influence an elected official or candidate.

9. As an agency of the state, the SBI was a government entity as defined in Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5(f)(5). The contributor was a covered associate of Respondent as defined in Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5(f)(2). The individual who received the contribution was an official of a government entity as defined in Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5(f)(6) because the office the person was associated with or sought to become associated with had authority either to influence the hiring of investment advisers by the government entity or to appoint people who could influence the hiring of investment advisers by the government entity.

10. Under Advisers Act Rule 206(4)-5, the contribution triggered a two-year “time out” on Respondent providing investment advisory services for compensation to SBI. During the two years after the contribution, Respondent continued to provide investment advisory services for compensation to the Funds and, therefore, received advisory fees and carried interest attributable to the investments of SBI in the Funds.

Violations

11. As a result of the conduct described above, Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners willfully⁸ violated Section 206(4) of the Advisers Act and Rule 206(4)-5 thereunder,

⁶ See Rule 206(4)-5(f)(5).

⁷ “Official” includes any person who, at the time of the relevant contribution, was an incumbent, candidate or successful candidate for elective office of a government entity if the office is directly or indirectly responsible for, or can influence the outcome of, the hiring of an investment adviser by a government entity or has authority to appoint any person who is directly or indirectly responsible for, or can influence the outcome of, the hiring of an investment adviser by a government entity. See Rule 206(4)-5(f)(6).

⁸ “Willfully,” for purposes of imposing relief under Section 203(e) of the Advisers Act, “means no more than that the person charged with the duty knows what he is doing.” Wonsover v. SEC, 205 F.3d 408, 414 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (quoting Hughes v. SEC, 174 F.2d 969, 977 (D.C. Cir. 1949)). There is no requirement that the actor “also be aware that he is violating one of the Rules or Acts.” Tager v. SEC, 344 F.2d 5, 8 (2d Cir. 1965). The decision in The Robare Group, Ltd. v. SEC, which construed the term “willfully” for purposes of a differently structured statutory provision, does not alter that standard. 922 F.3d 468, 478-79 (D.C. Cir. 2019) (setting forth the showing required to establish that a person has “willfully omit[ted]” material information from a required disclosure in violation of Section 207 of the Advisers Act).

which makes it unlawful for any investment adviser registered (or required to be registered) with the Commission, or unregistered in reliance on the exemption available under Section 203(b)(3) of the Advisers Act, or that is an exempt reporting adviser, to provide investment advisory services for compensation to a government entity within two years after a contribution to an official of the government entity is made by the investment adviser or any covered associate of the investment adviser.

IV.

In view of the foregoing, the Commission deems it appropriate and in the public interest to impose the sanctions agreed to in Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners' Offer.

Accordingly, pursuant to Sections 203(e) and 203(k) of the Advisers Act, it is hereby ORDERED that:

A. Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners cease and desist from committing or causing any violations and any future violations of Section 206(4) of the Advisers Act and Rule 206(4)-5 thereunder.

B. Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners is censured.

C. Respondent Wayzata Investment Partners shall, within 10 days of the entry of this Order, pay a civil money penalty in the amount of \$60,000 to the Securities and Exchange Commission for transfer to the general fund of the United States Treasury, subject to Exchange Act Section 21F(g)(3). If timely payment is not made, additional interest shall accrue pursuant to 31 U.S.C. §3717. Payment must be made in one of the following ways:

- (1) Respondent may transmit payment electronically to the Commission, which will provide detailed ACH transfer/Fedwire instructions upon request;
- (2) Respondent may make direct payment from a bank account via Pay.gov through the SEC website at <http://www.sec.gov/about/offices/ofm.htm>; or
- (3) Respondent may pay by certified check, bank cashier's check, or United States postal money order, made payable to the Securities and Exchange Commission and hand-delivered or mailed to:

Enterprise Services Center
Accounts Receivable Branch
HQ Bldg., Room 181, AMZ-341
6500 South MacArthur Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73169

Payments by check or money order must be accompanied by a cover letter identifying Wayzata Investment Partners LLC as the Respondent in these proceedings, and the file number of these proceedings; a copy of the cover letter and check or money order must be sent to LeeAnn Ghazil Gaunt, Chief, Public Finance Abuse Unit, Securities and Exchange Commission, Boston Regional Office, 33 Arch Street, 24th Floor, Boston, MA 02110.

D. Amounts ordered to be paid as civil money penalties pursuant to this Order shall be treated as penalties paid to the government for all purposes, including all tax purposes. To preserve the deterrent effect of the civil penalty, Respondent agrees that in any Related Investor Action, it shall not argue that it is entitled to, nor shall it benefit by, offset or reduction of any award of compensatory damages by the amount of any part of Respondent's payment of a civil penalty in this action ("Penalty Offset"). If the court in any Related Investor Action grants such a Penalty Offset, Respondent agrees that it shall, within 30 days after entry of a final order granting the Penalty Offset, notify the Commission's counsel in this action and pay the amount of the Penalty Offset to the Securities and Exchange Commission. Such a payment shall not be deemed an additional civil penalty and shall not be deemed to change the amount of the civil penalty imposed in this proceeding. For purposes of this paragraph, a "Related Investor Action" means a private damages action brought against Respondent by or on behalf of one or more investors based on substantially the same facts as alleged in the Order instituted by the Commission in this proceeding.

By the Commission.

Vanessa A. Countryman
Secretary