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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS**
	)	**FOR THE**
COUNTY OF GREENVILLE	)	**THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

JEFFREY LAWRENCE, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, Plaintiff, v. BLUE RIDGE RURAL WATER COMPANY, INC., Defendant.	Case No.: 2025-CP-23-03210

ORDER GRANTING PRELIMINARY
APPROVAL OF CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT

WHEREAS this matter having come before the Court upon the Plaintiff's Unopposed Motion for Preliminary Approval of Class Action Settlement;

WHEREAS, Plaintiff,[1] individually and on behalf of the Settlement Class, and Defendant, have entered into a Settlement which, if approved, would resolve this class action; and

WHEREAS, the Court having reviewed and considered the Motion for Preliminary Approval and all exhibits thereto, including the Settlement Agreement and the proposed Notice Plan, the Court finds that there is sufficient basis for: (i) granting Preliminary Approval of the Settlement Agreement; (ii) provisionally certifying the Settlement Class for settlement purposes only; (iii) appointing Plaintiff as Class Representative; (iv) appointing Cassandra P. Miller of Strauss Borrelli PLLC as Settlement Class Counsel; (v) approving the Notice Program and the Notices to the Settlement Class as set forth in the Settlement Agreement; (vi) approving the Claim

[1] All capitalized terms used in this Order shall have the same meaning as set forth in the Settlement Agreement.

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Process and Claim Form as set forth in the Settlement Agreement; and (vii) setting a schedule for the Final Approval hearing and other remaining procedures. The Court now finds and orders as follows:

Provisional Certification of the Settlement Class

1. For settlement purposes only, pursuant to South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23, the Court provisionally certifies the following Settlement Class:

> All individuals residing in the United States whose Personal Information was impacted in the Data Incident affecting Blue Ridge on or around July 2024, including all individuals who received notice of the Data Incident.

Excluded from the Settlement Class are (i) Defendant; (ii) all Settlement Class Members who timely and validly request exclusion from the Settlement Class; (iii) any judges assigned to this case and their staff and family; and (iv) any other person found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be guilty under criminal law of initiating, causing, aiding or abetting the criminal activity that caused the Data Incident or who pleads *nolo contendere* to any such charge.

2. In provisionally certifying the Settlement Class, the Court makes the following findings for settlement purposes only pursuant to South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23:

(a) Based on the information provided, the Settlement Class is so numerous as to make joinder impracticable;

(b) There are questions of law and fact common to the class, including whether Defendant implemented reasonable administrative, technical, and/or physical controls to protect the confidentiality, availability and integrity of the information compromised in the Data Incident, and those common questions support certification of the Settlement Class for settlement purposes;

(c) Plaintiff's claims and the defenses thereto are typical of the claims of Settlement Class

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Members, as Plaintiff and Settlement Class Members have suffered similar injuries as a result of the same course of conduct by Defendant;

(d) Plaintiff and Class Counsel will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Settlement Class; and

(e) The amount in controversy exceeds one hundred dollars for each member of the class.

Appointment of Class Representative and Class Counsel

3. Solely for the purposes of effectuating the Settlement, Plaintiff Jeffrey Lawrence is appointed as Class Representative for the Settlement Class.

4. Cassandra P. Miller of Strauss Borrelli PLLC is appointed as Settlement Class Counsel for the Settlement Class.

Preliminary Approval of Settlement Agreement

5. After reviewing the proposed Settlement Agreement and Motion for Preliminary Approval, the Court preliminarily concludes pursuant to South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23(c) that the proposed Settlement is fair, reasonable, and adequate, entered in good faith, free of collusion, and within the range of possible judicial approval. At or after the Final Approval Hearing, the Court shall determine, among other matters, whether the Settlement should be granted Final Approval.

Final Approval Hearing

6. A Final Approval Hearing shall take place before this Court on _____, 2026, at __:__ a.m./p.m. in Courtroom ____ of the Greenville County Courthouse, 305 E. North Street, Greenville, SC 29601, or by such other means as directed by the Court, to determine, among other things, whether: (a) the proposed Settlement Class should be finally certified for settlement purposes pursuant to South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23; (b) the Settlement should be finally approved as fair, reasonable, and adequate and, in accordance with the Settlement's terms,

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all claims in the Complaint should be dismissed with prejudice; (c) Settlement Class Members should be bound by the Releases set forth in the Settlement; (d) the proposed Final Approval Order and final judgment should be entered; and (e) the Class Counsel's Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award should be granted. Any other matters the Court deems necessary and appropriate will also be addressed at the hearing. The Court may elect to hold the Final Approval Hearing virtually by Zoom or some other application, and if it does, the instructions on how to attend shall be posted by the Settlement Administrator on the Settlement Website. The hearing may be re-scheduled without further notice to the Settlement Class. Any changes in the date or time will be posted on the Settlement Website.

7. Class Counsel intends to seek an award of up to $225,000.00 as attorneys' fees and reimbursement of Litigation Costs and Expenses, and a Service Award for the Class Representative of up to $5,000.00 to be paid separately by Defendant pursuant to the Settlement Agreement. These amounts appear reasonable, but the Court will defer ruling on those Awards until the Final Approval Hearing when considering Class Counsel's Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award.

8. Class Counsel shall file the Motion for Final Approval and Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award no later than forty-five (45) days before the initially scheduled Final Approval Hearing, and in all events no later than fourteen (14) days before the Opt-Out and Objection Deadlines. At the Final Approval Hearing, the Court will hear argument on Class Counsel's request for attorneys' fees, costs, and Service Award.

9. Any Settlement Class Member who has not timely and properly opted-out from the Settlement in the manner described below, may appear at the Final Approval Hearing in-person or by counsel and be heard, to the extent allowed by the Court, regarding the proposed Settlement.

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However, no Settlement Class Member who has elected to opt-out from the Settlement shall be entitled to object or otherwise appear. Further, no Settlement Class Member shall be heard in opposition to the Settlement unless the Settlement Class Member complies with the requirements set forth in this Preliminary Approval Order pertaining to objections, which are described below.

Settlement Administration

10. Simpluris, Inc. is appointed as the Settlement Administrator, with responsibility for handling the Notice Program and overseeing the Claim Process. All Settlement Notice and Administrative Expenses incurred by the Settlement Administrator will be paid by Defendant separately from the costs associated with providing the Settlement Benefits, as provided in the Settlement.

Notice to the Settlement Class

11. The Notice, including the Short Form Notice and Long Form Notice, along with the Claim Form, attached as exhibits to the Settlement Agreement, satisfy the requirements of South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23 and due process, and thus are approved. Non-material modifications to the Notices and Claim Form may be made by written agreement of the Parties without further order of the Court. The Settlement Administrator is directed to carry out the Notice Program and to perform all other tasks that the Settlement requires.

12. The Court finds that the form, content, and method of the Notices: (a) constitute the best practicable notice to the Settlement Class; (b) are reasonably calculated, under the circumstances, to apprise Settlement Class Members of the pendency of the Action, the terms of the proposed Settlement, and their rights under the proposed Settlement; (c) are reasonable and constitute due, adequate, and sufficient notice to those persons entitled to receive notice; and (d) satisfy the requirements of South Carolina Rule of Civil Procedure 23, the constitutional

requirement of due process, and any other legal requirements. The Court further finds that the Notice is written in plain language, uses simple terminology, and is designed to be readily understandable by Settlement Class Members.

Opting Out of the Settlement Class

13. Any Settlement Class Member who wishes to opt out of the Settlement must submit a Request for Exclusion either through the Settlement Website or by United States mail to the Settlement Administrator, postmarked no later than the Opt-Out Deadline, which is 30 days before the initial scheduled Final Approval Hearing date. The Request for Exclusion must include the name of this proceeding, the Settlement Class Member's full name, current address, personal signature (or electronic attestation for submissions made through the Settlement Website), and the words "Request for Exclusion" or a comparable statement that the individual does not wish to participate in the Settlement. Any Settlement Class Member who does not submit a valid and timely request to opt out in the manner described herein shall be bound by the Settlement, including all Releases, as well as all subsequent proceedings, orders, and judgments applicable to the Settlement Class.

14. Settlement Class Members cannot opt-out by telephone or email. No person may purport to exercise exclusion rights on behalf of any other person, opt out Settlement Class Members as a group, in the aggregate, or as a class, or submit a Request for Exclusion on behalf of more than one Settlement Class Member. "Mass" or "class" requests for exclusion filed on behalf of a "mass" or "class" of Settlement Class Members or multiple Settlement Class Members, where an opt-out has not been signed by each and every individual Settlement Class Member, will not be allowed. Any such purported request for exclusion shall be void.

15. All Settlement Class Members who submit valid and timely requests to opt-out of

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the Settlement shall not: (i) be bound by any orders or judgments entered in connection with the Settlement; (ii) be entitled to any relief under, or be affected by, the Settlement; (iii) gain any rights by virtue of the Settlement; (iv) receive any Settlement benefits; or (v) be entitled to object to any aspect of the Settlement. All Settlement Class Members who do not timely and validly opt out shall be bound by the Settlement, including the Release, regardless of whether they submit a claim or receive any monetary benefits.

Objecting to the Settlement

16. A Settlement Class Member who complies with the requirements of this Preliminary Approval Order and the Agreement may object to the Settlement and/or Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award.

17. No Settlement Class Member shall be heard, and no papers, briefs, pleadings, or other documents submitted by any Settlement Class member shall be received and considered by the Court, unless a written objection is filed with the Court or submitted through the Settlement Website before the Objection Deadline, which shall be 30 days before the initial scheduled Final Approval Hearing date. For the objection to be considered by the Court, the written objection must include:

a. the objector's full name and current mailing address;

b. the case name and case number: *Lawrence v. Blue Ridge Rural Water Company, Inc.*, Case No.: 2025-CP-23-03210;

c. documentation sufficient to establish membership in the Settlement Class, such as a copy of the Short Form Notice the objector received;

d. a statement that states with specificity all grounds for the objection, as well as any documents supporting the objection;

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e. the identity of all counsel who represent the objector, including any former or current counsel who may be entitled to compensation for any reason related to the objection to the Settlement and/or Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award;

f. a statement regarding whether the objector and/or his or her counsel intends to appear at the Final Approval Hearing; and

g. the signature of the Settlement Class Member and their attorney, if represented (or an electronic attestation for submissions through the Settlement Website).

18. Objections must be filed with the Court or submitted through the Settlement Website and copies must be provided to Class Counsel, Defendant's Counsel, and the Settlement Administrator by U.S. Mail, email, or through the Settlement Website at the addresses listed on the Long Form Notice and which will also appear on the Settlement Website.

19. Any Settlement Class Member who fails to object to the Settlement in the manner described herein shall be deemed to have waived any such objection, shall not be permitted to object to any terms or approval of the Settlement at the Final Approval Hearing, and shall be precluded from seeking any review of the Settlement or approval thereof by appeal or any other means.

Claims Process and Distribution Plan

20. The Settlement establishes a Claim Process for assessing and determining the validity and value of Claims and a methodology for paying Settlement Class Members that submit an Approved Claim. The Court preliminarily approves this process.

21. Settlement Class Members that qualify for and wish to submit a Claim shall do so

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in accordance with the requirements and procedures specified in the Settlement, including the requirements and procedures in the Claim Form. If the Settlement is finally approved, all Settlement Class Members that qualify for Settlement Class Member Benefits, but who fail to submit a valid Claim Form in accordance with the requirements and procedures specified in the Settlement, including the Claim Form requirements, shall be forever barred from receiving any of the Settlement Class Member Benefits. Such Settlement Class Members, however, will in all other respects be subject to and bound by the provisions of the Settlement, including the Releases, the Final Approval Order, and final judgment.

Termination of the Settlement and Use of this Order

22. This Preliminary Approval Order shall become null and void and shall be without prejudice to the rights of the Parties, all of which shall be restored to their respective positions existing immediately before this Court entered this Preliminary Approval Order, if the Settlement is not finally approved by the Court, the Settlement is terminated in accordance with its terms, or there is no Effective Date. In such event, the Settlement shall become null and void and be of no further force and effect, the certification of the Settlement Class shall be void, and neither the Settlement (including any Settlement-related filings) nor the Court's orders, including this Preliminary Approval Order, relating to the Settlement shall be used or referred to for any purpose whatsoever.

23. If the Settlement is not finally approved by the Court, the Settlement is terminated in accordance with its terms, or there is no Effective Date, then this Preliminary Approval Order shall be of no force or effect; shall not be construed or used as an admission, concession, or declaration by or against Defendant of any fault, wrongdoing, breach, or liability; shall not be construed or used as an admission, concession, or declaration by or against any Class

Representative or any other Settlement Class Member that his or her claims lack merit or that the relief requested is inappropriate, improper, unavailable; and shall not constitute a waiver by any party of any defense (including without limitation any defense to class certification) or claims he or she may have in this Action or in any other lawsuit.

Stay of Proceedings

24. Except as necessary to effectuate this Preliminary Approval Order, all proceedings and deadlines in this Action are stayed pending the Final Approval Hearing and issuance of the Final Approval Order and judgment, or until further order of this Court.

25. Upon entry of this Order, with the exception of Class Counsel's, Defendant's Counsel's, Defendant's, and the Class Representative's implementation of the Settlement and the approval process in this Action, all Settlement Class Members shall be provisionally enjoined and barred from asserting any claims or continuing any litigation against Defendant and the Released Parties arising out of, relating to, or in connection with the Released Claims prior to the Court's decision as to whether to grant Final Approval of the Settlement.

Adjournment or Continuance of Final Approval Hearing

26. The Court, at its direction, may adjourn or continue the Final Approval Hearing date without further written notice to the Settlement Class. If the Court does so, the new date shall be posted on the Settlement Website maintained by the Settlement Administrator. The Court may elect to hold the Final Approval Hearing virtually by Zoom or some other application, and if it does, the instructions on how to attend shall be posted by the Settlement Administrator on the Settlement Website.

Jurisdiction Pending Settlement Approval

27. For the benefit of the Settlement Class and to protect this Court's jurisdiction, this

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Court retains continuing jurisdiction over the proceedings to ensure the effectuation thereof in accordance with the Settlement preliminarily approved herein and the related orders of this Court.

Summary of Deadlines

28. The Settlement, as preliminarily approved, shall be administered according to its terms pending the Final Approval Hearing. The Court hereby sets the following schedule of events:

Event	**Deadline**
Defendant provides the Settlement Class List to the Settlement Administrator	Within fifteen (15) days of the entry of the Preliminary Approval Order
Notice Deadline	Thirty (30) days after entry of the Preliminary Approval Order
Plaintiff shall file the Motion for Final Approval of the Settlement and Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award	At least forty-five (45) days before the initially scheduled Final Approval Hearing, and in all events no later than fourteen (14) days before the Opt-Out and Objection Deadlines
Objection Deadline	Thirty (30) days before the initially scheduled Final Approval Hearing
Opt-Out Deadline	Thirty (30) days before the initially scheduled Final Approval Hearing
Claims Deadline	Ninety (90) days after the Notice Deadline.
Any supplemental materials in support of Final Approval or Application for Attorneys' Fees, Costs, and Service Award	At least fourteen (14) days before the Final Approval Hearing
Final Approval Hearing	**_____, 2026, at __:__ a.m./p.m. in Courtroom 709** (no earlier than one hundred twenty (120) days after entry of the Preliminary Approval Order)

IT IS SO ORDERED, this the _____ day of _____, 2026.

_____

The Hon. Circuit Court Judge

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Greenville Common Pleas

Case Caption:	Jeffrey Lawrence vs. Blue Ridge Rural Water Company Inc
Case Number:	2025CP2303210
Type:	Order/Approval Of Settlement

So Ordered

Jessica A. Salvini