

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN AND
FOR ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**CASE NO.: 2008-CA-780
WRIT NO.: 08-06**

ADAM REISS,
Petitioner,

v.

**STATE OF FLORIDA, DEPARTMENT
OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR
VEHICLES,**

Respondent.

Petition for Writ of Certiorari
from the Florida Department of
Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles,
Jim Kuritz, Hearing Officer.

Stuart I. Hyman, Esquire,
for Petitioner.

Heather Rose Cramer, Assistant General Counsel,
for Respondent.

Before KIRKWOOD, THORPE, and GRINCEWICZ, J.J.

PER CURIAM.

FINAL ORDER GRANTING PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioner Adam Reiss (Petitioner) timely filed this petition seeking certiorari review of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles' (Department) Final Order of License Suspension, sustaining the suspension of his driver's license pursuant to section 322.2615, Florida Statutes. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to sections 322.2615 and 322.31, Florida Statutes, and Florida Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.030(c)(3).

On October 31, 2007, at approximately 1:37 a.m., Trooper Lotter of the Florida Highway Patrol arrived at the scene of a traffic crash. Witnesses at the scene of the traffic crash identified Petitioner as the driver of the vehicle. Upon making contact with Petitioner, Trooper Lotter observed that Petitioner's eyes were red and watery, his speech was slurred, and he was staggering and swaying. Trooper Lotter also observed an odor of alcohol emitting from Petitioner's breath. After issuing a citation for careless driving, Trooper Lotter advised Petitioner that the crash investigation was completed and a criminal investigation had begun. Based on Petitioner's poor performance on the field sobriety exercises, Trooper Lotter arrested Petitioner and transported him to the breath testing facility. Petitioner agreed to submit to a breath test and gave breath-alcohol samples of .246 and .245. As a result, the Department suspended Petitioner's driving privileges.

Pursuant to section 322.2615(6), Florida Statutes, Petitioner requested a formal review of his license suspension. On December 13, 2007, the hearing officer held a formal review hearing at which Petitioner was represented by counsel. Petitioner moved to invalidate the license suspension on five grounds: (1) the hearing officer failed to issue subpoenas for Roger Skipper, Laura Barfield, Kelly Melville, and Tanya Shrum; (2) the breath testing machine was not approved for use in the State of Florida; (3) failure of the record to contain a maintenance report for November or December; (4) documents in the record indicated that the breath testing machine did not pass department inspection on April 5, 2007; and (5) failure of the record to contain admissible competent evidence establishing Petitioner as driver of the vehicle. Petitioner also moved to strike the accident report and witness statements under the accident report privilege. On December 17, 2007, the hearing officer entered an order denying Petitioner's motions and sustaining the suspension of his driver's license finding that the law enforcement

officer had probable cause to believe that Petitioner was driving or in actual physical control of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or chemical or controlled substances and that he had an unlawful breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or higher.

The Court's review of an administrative agency decision is governed by a three-part standard of review: (1) whether procedural due process was accorded; (2) whether the essential requirements of the law were observed; and (3) whether the decision was supported by competent, substantial evidence. City of Deerfield Beach v. Vaillant, 419 So. 2d 624, 626 (Fla. 1982). "It is neither the function nor the prerogative of a circuit judge to reweigh evidence and make findings [of fact] when [undertaking] a review of a decision of an administrative forum." Dep't of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles v. Allen, 539 So. 2d 20, 21 (Fla. 5th DCA 1989).

In cases where the individual's license is suspended for an unlawful breath-alcohol level, "the hearing officer shall determine by a preponderance of the evidence whether sufficient cause exists to sustain, amend, or invalidate the suspension." § 322.2615(7), Fla. Stat. (2007). The hearing officer's scope of review is limited to the following issues:

1. Whether the law enforcement officer had probable cause to believe that the person whose license was suspended was driving or in actual physical control of a motor vehicle in this state while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or chemical or controlled substances.
2. Whether the person whose license was suspended had an unlawful blood-alcohol level or breath-alcohol level of 0.08 or higher as provided in s. 316.193.

§ 322.2615(7)(a), Fla. Stat. (2007).

At issue in the instant case is whether the hearing officer departed from the essential requirements of the law in interpreting section 322.2615(6)(b) to prohibit the issuance of a subpoena for Kelly Melville, Roger Skipper, Laura Barfield, and Tanya Shrum. Petitioner argues that the hearing officer's failure to issue subpoenas violated his right to full discovery

concerning the breath test machine upon which he was tested. He also asserts that the breath test results were inadmissible because the samples were obtained by using an unapproved and unreliable breath testing machine. Petitioner further asserts that the breath test results should have been excluded because the breath test regulations are insufficient due to the lack of a uniform method of administration. Lastly, Petitioner asserts that the record lacks competent substantial evidence establishing that Petitioner was driving or in actual physical control of the vehicle.

With respect to Petitioner's argument regarding the hearing officer's failure to issue subpoenas, the Department asserts that there was not a departure from the essential requirements of the law because the hearing officer lacked authority to issue the subpoenas. The Department contends that under section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, a hearing officer may only issue subpoenas for witnesses identified in the following documents: (1) the driver's license; (2) an affidavit stating the officer's grounds for belief that a driver was under the influence of alcohol; (3) the results of any breath test or an affidavit stating that a breath test was requested by the officer and that person refused to submit; (4) the officer's description of a person's field sobriety test, if any; (5) the notice of suspension; and (6) a copy of the crash report, if any. Because the witnesses at issue are not named in the above described documents, the Department asserts that the hearing officer did not have authority to issue the subpoenas. With respect to Petitioner's other arguments, the Department asserts that it established substantial compliance with FDLE rules to render Petitioner's breath test results admissible. The Department further contends that there is competent substantial evidence to support the hearing officer's determination that the arresting officer had probable cause to believe that Petitioner was driving or in actual physical control of the vehicle.

Following the briefing phase in this appeal, the Department filed a motion to abate and remand for further proceedings citing the Second District's decision in Yankey v. Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, 6 So. 3d 633 (Fla. 2d DCA 2009)(finding that when the department relies upon a document prepared by an agency inspector to properly validate the breath test results, section 322.2615, Florida Statutes, permits the driver to subpoena the inspector identified in that document). The Department's motion to abate and remand is still pending.

In Yankey, the petitioner filed a petition for writ of certiorari seeking to quash a circuit court order affirming the department's suspension of her license for driving with an unlawful breath-alcohol level. Id. at 634. The petitioner asserted that the hearing officer and the circuit court departed from the essential requirements of the law in interpreting section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, to prohibit the department's issuance of a subpoena for the agency inspector responsible for testing the breath test machine and signing the agency inspection report. Id. Pursuant to section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, a driver in a formal review hearing "may subpoena those witnesses who are identified in documents submitted by the arresting officer, which documents include the results of any breath test." Yankey, 6 So. 3d at 637; see also §22.2615(2), Fla. Stat. The Second District acknowledged that law enforcement had established a practice of routinely providing the department with a breath-alcohol analysis report, a breath test affidavit, and an agency inspection report, in order to report the results of the breath test and support the license suspension. Yankey, 6 So. 3d at 637. Based on the statutory and administrative code provisions regarding the procedures to establish the validity of breath test results, the Second District concluded that when an officer suspends a person's license and "submits breath test results pursuant to section 322.2615(2) that include the breath alcohol

analysis report, a breath test affidavit, and an agency inspection report, and those documents identify specific persons, the hearing officer is authorized under section 322.2615(6)(b) to issue a subpoena to any person ‘identified in’ those documents.” Id. at 638.

We find the Yankey decision to be dispositive of the instant case. See Hendeles v. Sanford Auto Auction, Inc., 364 So. 2d 467, 468 (Fla. 1978)(disposition of a case on appeal should be made in accord with the law in effect at the time of the appellate court’s decision rather than the law in effect that the time the judgment appealed was rendered). Below, the Department entered the breath-alcohol test affidavit, the agency inspection report, and the department inspection report into evidence. The agency inspection report was completed by Kelly Melville and the department inspection report was completed by Roger Skipper. Like in Yankey, the hearing officer below refused to issue the subpoenas asserting that section 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, did not authorize him to do so.

Based on the foregoing, the Court finds that the hearing officer was authorized under 322.2615(6)(b), Florida Statutes, to issue a subpoena to Kelly Melville and the hearing officer’s failure to do so constituted a departure from the essential requirements of the law. In light of this conclusion, the Court finds it unnecessary to address the additional arguments made by Petitioner and the Department.

Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED AND ADJUDGED** that the Petition for Writ of Certiorari is **GRANTED**; the Department’s Motion to Abate Petition for Writ of Certiorari and Remand for Further Proceedings, filed March 18, 2009, is **DENIED**; and the hearing officer’s Final Order of License Suspension is **QUASHED**.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, at Orlando, Orange County, Florida on this
__14__ day of _____ April _____, 2010.

_____/S/_____
LAWRENCE R. KIRKWOOD
Circuit Judge

_____/S/_____
JANET C. THORPE
Circuit Judge

_____/S/_____
DONALD E. GRINCEWICZ
Circuit Judge

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Order has been furnished via U.S. mail to **Stuart I. Hyman, Esquire**, 1520 East Amelia Street, Orlando, Florida 32803 and **Heather Rose Cramer, Assistant General Counsel**, DHSMV-Legal Office, Post Office Box 540609, Lake Worth, FL 33454-0609, on the _14__ day __April_____, 2010.

_____/S/_____
Judicial Assistant