Costly claims

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

Before this month is over, a government worker’s mistake, mishap or misdeed will cost taxpayers in Knoxville and Knox County cash. And, like the victim of a skilled pickpocket, the taxpayer will be none the wiser.

A months-long investigation by the News Sentinel revealed taxpayers fork out more than $1 million each year in Knoxville and Knox County to pay legal claims against public workers in a process that is largely hidden from public scrutiny.

Deputies torment a young motorist, but he is barred from talking about it lest he lose the $38,000 the county paid him. A jailer pockets a warning of an impending suicide, a woman dies and the only proof of her existence, let alone her suicide, is a form authorizing a payment to her widower.

A police officer accidentally shoots a man in the back. His mistake makes headlines. The $293,000 check to pay for it does not. A single email tucked in a law department file is the only proof money changed hands.

Government workers speed, run red lights, crash into unsuspecting motorists, make false arrests, ignore inmates’ medical needs, brutalize suspects, violate policies and procedures, negligently handle children in their care, and yet, rarely are they fired — or even punished.

The News Sentinel will expose the hidden world of risk management claims in a five-day series beginning today.

PAGES 20-22A

Mud runners

Nearly 1,800 people turned out for the annual Marine Mud Run, a grueling 5K obstacle course through Melton Hill Park.

LOCAL, IB

Texting at the wheel. It’s more common—and more dangerous—than you think. Join It Can Wait. AT&T’s national movement to end texting and driving. Because no text is worth dying for.

#Itcanwait | Join the movement | #Itcanwait

join us in our effort... take the pledge today

Today’s Coupons!

There are $160 in coupon savings in today’s News Sentinel.
(Offer may vary by area.)

Leader’s challenge

The Kingston ash spill and Watts Bar Nuclear Plant cost overruns drew the most publicity during his time as TVA chairman, but Bill Sansom was determined to get the utility’s financial house in order and make it more responsive to the public.

BUSINESS, 1C

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

The cruiser driven by Knox County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Toby Champion ended up in Eva and Les Pierce’s garage on Cunningham Road on Jan. 30, 2011. The crash cost taxpayers $71,200. Champion was not fired, but he was ordered to undergo remedial driving lessons.

LOCAL, IB

Vols’ rally falls short as UT loses to fourth-ranked Oklahoma, 34-10.

GOVOLSXTRA, 1V

OVERPOWERED

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LOCAL, IB

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GOVOLSXTRA, 1V
When citizens are wronged, local governments pay, to a point

By Jamie Satterfield

satterfieldj@knoxnews.com

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COSTLY CLAIMS

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

The crash made head- lines. The financial punch to Knox County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Tyler Champion wasn’t unquestioningly speed was, evidenced by just how far he traveled off that inaudible, and just how much dam- age he caused. The crash wasn’t slammed through two homes, went in a ditch and struck two ve- hicles with enough force to push one of them into the garage into the den of the home of Les and Eva Pierce. Champion’s cruis- er plowed through the garage.

The Pierces weren’t hurt in January 2011 but they suffered nonetheless. They were forced out of their North Knox Coun- ty home for three months. They have to rely on their utensils.

The food is in a re- frigerator like Champion.

And, to add insult to injury, another county em- ployee backed into their lower bed, knocking over a wooden wall and solar lights, during repairs to their home.

Champion said he was rushing to go to the aid of another deputy, records show. But his severe wasn’t activated, and records are devoid of proof of the na- ture of the call to which he said he was responding. The crash cost taxpay- ers $71,200. Champion was ordered to undergo remedial driving lessons.

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COSTLY CLAIMS

is saying it's the city's issues where the citizen All, he said, require a determination is made. Assistance before a fault on whether the county is "Then we make a decision gate on site," Jones said. Investigations of most claims. Conduct independent investigations reviewed by the News form, according to records when a citizen files a claim time risk management the employee accused of tracks down the citizen send in accident reports, car crashes, law enforcers method for claims to be re- change in the way govern- ment operates. Huskey denied the claim, but the city wound up paying $10,000 anyway. The legal file on the case offers no explanation. County risk management employee Melissa Ramsey questioned whether Les Pierce, the Cunningham Road cruiser crash victim, should be reimbursed for a $22 hair cut from Sports Clips. "He states that he cuts his own hair, unable to do so due to no utilities at their home," Ramsey wrote. The county paid it. "We don't like making nuisance settlements because there are low fees some- thing that will live off you," Eastes said.

LEGAL LIMITS

Don't use the term "nuisance" — saying a claim where fault is denied simply to avoid the cost of litigation — when chatting up Charles Swanson, Knox County law director, or Richard "Bud" Armstrong, his county counterpart. To them, it's simply a cost calculation.

"I'm not going to pay $5,000 to send (deputy law director David Wigler) to court to save us $500," Armstrong said. "It's all in what's in the best interest of Knox County." With experience, you develop some understanding of, if this case goes to countability," he said. Here, then, is a history of arrests on minor offenses whose pleas for help in 2007 were ignored by county jail medical staff. She right- sided wound up delivering the baby alone in her cell. The infant's umbilical cord was torn, and Hightower lost a tre- mendous amount of blood. The cap, coupled with what Moncier said were delaying tactics by county lawyers hoping the would wind up back in trouble (false or not) after a settle- ment for $79,900. Six years later, the inac- cident of the jail's medical staff is dismissed by taxpayers more than $100,000 so far and remains one major federal lawsuit still pend- ing in one lower case. The governmental tort law also bars some law suits from Sports Clips. "He states that he cuts his own hair, unable to do so due to no utilities at their home," Ramsey wrote. The county paid it. "We don't like making nuisance settlements because there are low fees something that will live off you," Eastes said.

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False arrested? Tough luck.

Under state law, there are limited options for compensation.

By Jimmie Satterfield

Suppose a police officer finds an aspiring actor and insists on pressuring him to pay for his pictures. The actor is手法 Wholesale cualquier veces anyone who pays for his pictures, and the officer twists his arm. The actor is forced to pay. He is not necessarily a suspect. He is also not necessarily caught red-handed. He might be able to recover his money, but the police officer has already gotten his pictures.

You are handcuffed and arrested. Marly Siglighthouse, the police officer is watching, comfortably embarrassed, and allowing your reputation to be damaged. You are handed off to an officer who's just been hired and freed only after you post bail. Your attorney files suit, the publisher files a lawsuit, it's so much like the company of the 2002-2003 season, it's almost like the company of the 2004 season, the company of the 2005 season.

The lawsuit is thus far on appeal. The company of the 2002-2003 season is still in business. The company of the 2004 season is still in business. The company of the 2005 season is still in business.

The publicity is schadenfreude. The company of the 2002-2003 season is still in business. The company of the 2004 season is still in business. The company of the 2005 season is still in business.

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Chase for the Sprint Cup
Brad Keselowski takes IN NASCAR CHASE IS ON

Could expose underlying meltdown, but the new of last year's website Don't expect a repeat of last year's website multimillion, but the new sign-up period for the Affordable Care Act could expose underlying problems with the law itself that are less easily fixed than a computer system.

A NEW PEST
Kudzu and stink bugs? What could be worse for the South than a new pest?

NEW QUESTIONS
2ND SIGN-UP,

Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogero will be reporting $4.5 million in surplus revenue to the Knoxville City Council on Tuesday, with plans to spend most of that money on the city's fleet services, traffic signals, a pedestrian bridge, street repair, a few downtown roads and renovations to the Promenade roof along State Route 37.

The city reported that the source of the surplus comes from the Hall income tax fund, which has been one of the most stable sources of revenue for the city because of investments in property, such as stocks and bonds. "Because of the unpredictability of this revenue stream, we always budget cautiously," Rogero said in a prepared statement. "We have a healthy fund balance in our operating budget, which allows for more funds to address deferred maintenance needs and to begin or continue work on several of the identified capital projects."

Rogero will ask the City Council to recognize the additional revenues from the 2014-15 budget adopted a few months ago. At finance staff work to close the 2013-14 books, the city budgeted to receive $4.9 million in Hall tax revenue but instead received $9.2 million, leaving $4.3 million in unexpected revenue for the current fiscal year. "Collections from the tax can fluctuate greatly from year to year, making it hard to predict revenue from year to year," according to the news release.

For two years now, the city has reported unexpected large amounts of income tax revenue. Last year, officials reported a $4.4 million surplus from the 2012-13 fiscal year. Fiscal years end June 30.

Rogero and Christopher Branscom, chief operating officer, persuaded City Council members in March to authorize spending $3.5 million of that $4.4 million surplus for a variety of capital projects.

Rogero plans to ask Council to approve spending $4.3 million of the $4.5 million surplus for a variety of projects.

In the Tennessee House of Representatives, a Republican and a Democrat have proposed constitutional amendments that would allow the Legislature to override the governor's veto. The amendments would also require revenue bills to pass both chambers with a three-fourths majority, which is a difficult bar to reach. 

The city has been operating on a balanced budget as revenues have fluctuated, with the property and Hall income taxes making up the biggest part of the revenue stream. The city has been operating on a balanced budget as revenues have fluctuated, with the property and Hall income taxes making up the biggest part of the revenue stream.

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Public employees' mistakes cost taxpayers millions

With his hands in the air, Abraham Dudley obeyed police commands to walk backward toward two officers pointing their weapons at him. What happened next Nov. 1, 2012, in the West Town Mall parking lot was captured on in-cruiser video. A gunshot rang out. Dudley stumbled to the pavement.

Then-Knoxville Police Officer Chris Edmonds yelled, "Oh, (expletive)."

"I was shocked," Dudley said. "I really didn't expect that to happen." Dudley told the News Sentinel in a recent interview. "I didn't even know I was shot, I guess, when the shot hit me. I felt it in the ground. I was just scared and hoping I wouldn't die." The bullet from Edmonds' gun struck the 32-year-old Dudley in the back, a mere inches from his spine. "I could have been paralyzed," Dudley said.

The city of Knoxville's $293,000 payout in taxpayer funds to Dudley was the single highest documented in records from both the city and Knox County risk management funds in three years of claims reviewed by the News Sentinel. Dudley said he was hit by a $293,000 bullet.

Abraham Dudley stands in the parking lot of West Town Mall near where he said he was shot by former Knoxville Police Department Officer Christopher Edmonds almost two years ago. The city of Knoxville's $293,000 payout in taxpayer funds to Dudley was the single highest documented in records from both the city and Knox County risk management funds in three years of claims reviewed by the News Sentinel. Dudley said he was hit by a $293,000 bullet.

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The review showed that no one had stopped and conducted, law enforcement involved in the case, people were fired, whether they actually had a claim against the county's civil rights or simply fouled up.

In one case, a deputy remains employed at KPD despite being involved in these separate incidents, two of which cost taxpayers more than $50,000, or $80,000 if the full cost of some payouts came after this series of stories. In another one, a deputy fired and criminally prosecuted. That was a 2013 KPD case in which a homosexual couple was beaten and beaten in full view of a North Knoxville neighborhood of citizens and a store in this case.

KPD Chief David Rausch argues that even when officers aren't fired, their careers still suffer if they are charged against them. Reprimands, demotions and other internal punishment can affect an officer's pay, his or her job duties and opportunities for special training and promotion, he said.

"I think that has a big impact on an officer," said Rausch. "Your career is impacted."

Rausch also contends the city's decision to give a legal claim against a KPD officer does not mean the officer was at fault.

"There are times when we pay settlements when we aren't screwing up," he said, adding that it's a tough way to settle than to do it right the first time.

You're not admitting guilt just because you paid a settlement.

In cases involving alleged police misconduct, some payouts came after laws were filed, the News Sentinel probe showed.

In others, however, the mere threat of a public legal fight prompted a quiet settlement.

"The incident began as a theft, but there were no arrest warrants filed," said Sabrina Tarwater, the media of late, so I will talk about the deputies used profane language, and run around it until the top of the vertical bat was being manipulated by them. Rausch did not fire Edmonds, who then was a young deputy.

With his potential damages capped by law at $500,000 and a grand jury's inquiry, the threat of a long having cashed his settlement had passed.

"Edmond's situation is subject to early stageazy bat" incident, I am writing to Knox County the opportunity to settle this dispute without further fanfare."

Every morning I wake up and realize it's just like a bad feeling in your stomach," he said. "I always have mild pain in my back. It's really affecting me, but, still, I'm glad I'm here. I don't know if any of this fraud or theft has ever been to this morning.

"DIZZY BAT"

The deputies were charged with breaking his head, and Cox regained his police powers pending an internal investigation.

KPD spokesman Darrell Dullabh said Eldridge confirmed. "Every deputy has a copy of the payout via a legal claim against a KPD officer. Dullabh added, "Sheriff Jiminy "J.J." Jones refused to be interviewed for this series of stories.

In only one case were offic-

ers fired and criminally prosecuted. That was a 2013 KPD case in which a homosexual couple was beaten and beaten in full view of a North Knoxville neighborhood of citizens and a store in this case.

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**COSTLY CLAIMS**

**NORTH KNOXVILLE BEATING**

Michael Alan Mallicoat lies on the ground handcuffed and hogtied after being beaten by Knoxville Police Department officers Feb. 28, 2011, in North Knoxville. The homeless man, who was left with broken bones, had a spinal injury, a broken arm and a detached retina. He was eventually paid $35,000 to settle the case.

**CHILDISH INJURY**

The bodyguard was tracked down earlier in the week and brought back to the police station. He appeared to be drunk and disoriented when he was booked into jail. The victim complained of pain in his back. He was transported to the hospital for further treatment.

**HAZARDOUS RIDE**

Jail superintendent Stewart stated that he was unaware of any potential dangers associated with the ride. The prisoners were not wearing seat belts, handholds or any other restraining equipment. They were instead hogtied and ordered to sit on the ground.

**CLAIMS CHAT**

**WHOOPIN', WHOOPIN'**

The law department could have been in an equal bargaining position," attorney Bailey said. "They drug it out and drug it out. They drug it out and drug it out."

**JAIL INJURIES**

The incident began rolling backward in traffic when the three vehicle collision occurred. The inmates were not wearing seat belts, handholds or any other restraining equipment. They were instead hogtied and ordered to sit on the ground.

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More weather on 2A

A shower or t-storm

September 16, 2014

CLASSIFIED

EDITORIAL

2332 News Sentinel Drive

Oklahoma.

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VS. SOONERS

REGION, 6A

first-degree murder.

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BUSINESS, 1B

for new CEO.

outside the company Resources reaches Knoxville oil and gas

LEADERSHIP

SHAKE-UP

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CHARGES

IN CHILDS DEATH

More than three months after 17-month-

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### COSTLY CLAIMS

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

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**DRIVING DISTRACTED**

Officials from both government agencies said vehicle accidents top the list in number of instances, because the two entities have hundreds of vehicles on the road every day.

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Eric Vreeland, communications manager for Knox County Mayor Madeline Rogero, said the city’s fleet consists of 4,000, including firetrucks, heavy equipment and mowers.

KPD racked up the highest number of crashes in the records reviewed by the News Sentinel. Police Chief David Rasch said that’s not surprising.

“We’re out there driving 24-7, 365 days a year,” Rasch said. “We still have some accidents. That’s something we’re working on.”

He cited “backing up” as the chief cause for cruiser crashes. The News Sentinel reviewed distractions involving five cruisers in both city and county crashes.

Knoxville Police Department Office Clayton Presley had three at-a-116 crashes in months. In one, he backed out of a parking space and hit someone. In another, he tried to turn in front of an oncoming car and struck it in a third, he rear-ended a vehicle, following too closely to apply his brakes before the crash.

**Name** | **Agency** | **Total crashes** | **No. of crashes**
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Frank Brasse | Knox County Public Works | 21 | 1
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Adam Miner

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When the mowing season begins, taxpayers bleed green.

Every year, taxpayers unknowingly fork out thousands of dollars to utility companies to pay for damage larger than by city and county public works employees.

A review of legal claims paid from the risk manage- ment funds of Knox County and the city of Knoxville from 2010 to 2013 showed those govern- ments paid more than $10,000 for damaged utili- ty poles, hydrants and phone pedestals, downed phone and power lines and the occasional water main break.

The city shells out most of its utility-related damages to Knox County Utilities Board, the review showed.

Knox County wrote most of its check to RKUB.

The single highest claim for both govern- ments involved AT&T.

The county wrote out $32,000 to repair a broken phone box, while RKUB shelled out $20,401 when a Knox- ville police officer crashed into a pole.

Most of the damages ranged from $5,000 to $20,000.

Brian Brace, the director of highway maintenance for the county, attributes many of the mowing- related claims to the mowing season itself.

There are more mowers moving in the community and more homeowners voluntarily to hide utility equipment.

‘We all have weeds get high and our mowers will get those,’” he said. “Every time we go out, we get up to that.”

Brian Brace, the city’s public works director for the city, said the sheer size of the mowers is often to blame.

“You’re going into an alley, and you’re trying to mow an alleyway with a single mower driver,” he said. “It’s just tough.”

Both governments have tried to be more pro-active in challenging the claims.

Local utility companies actively in challenging the claims.

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Despite the admission by the city, they remain an annual cost to the city budget and leave them unknowingly fork out for damaged utility poles, hydrants and phone pedestals, downed phone and power lines and the occasional water main break.

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Habits of government workers try to mark utility prop- erty before the mowing season begins.

Brace said the city held $15,000 in claims for utility companies to pay for damages to the Knoxville as would have been required under the vehicle use policy. Instead, there is no record of any testing for drug or alcohol use.

Under Knox County’s vehicle use policy, Cripp- en would have been barred from driving from day because both prescriptions drugs carry warnings and manufacturers care operating against motor vehicles.

Because the schools are specifically exempted from the coun-

POLICY PROTECTIONS

Schools had to pay for damages to Knox County vehicles.

In November 2009, a Knox County Police De-

No testing was ordered despite the admission be- cause Crippen “did appear to be in control.”

Parsons wasn’t injured, but that crash cost taxpayers nearly $5,000 repair costs. Pursuant to a work order with a rental company, a police report was written by the driver and vehicle involved.

Under Knox County’s vehicle use policy, Cripp- en would have been barred from driving from day because both prescriptions drugs carry warnings and manufacturers care operating against motor vehicles.

Because the schools are exempt from the vehicle use policy, the crash was never independently reviewed.

KCSO court security officer Don Barras hit a parked car on a hill below the city-owned Waterway home in May 2009.

He said he drifted out of his lane of traffic because he was distracted by “pe- sonal matters” according to records. He did not alert KPD, which has juris- diction in downtown Knoxville as would have been required under the vehicle use policy. Instead, there is no record of any testing for drug or alcohol use.

The crash was reviewed by the county’s vehicle use policy team because of the agency’s policy exemption.

Months later, Barras showed up at KCSO in an intoxicated state. A week later, he was charged with DUI in his personal ve- hicle on the night before he was due to turn in his resignation.

NO PART OF THIS ARTICLE MAY BE COPIED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE NEWS SENTINEL."

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COSTLY CLAIMS  Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

By Jamie Satterfield
satterfield@knoxnews.com
865-521-6519

A single piece of candy caused a sixth-grader to go into shock, led to a warning for a Knox County teacher and cost taxpayers $50,000.

It is one of dozens of legal claims involving Knox County Schools paid from the risk management fund. A review of three years’ worth of paid claims from the taxpayer-funded pool of cash showed the school system pays more than any other county agency examined by the News Sentinel.

From 2010 to 2013, schools accounted for $3.1 million in payments from the fund. The next highest tally among county agencies — $837,604 — involved the Knox County Sheriff’s Office.

Knox County and the city of Knoxville are self-insured, meaning the two governments opt to set aside money each year in the budget to cover legal claims against its employeers rather than buy insurance.

Bob Thomas, assistant superintendent for administrative services for schools, talks about claims.

Stars: 5 of 5

INJURY MAY TAKE CONTROL

Mariah Pielous scores two goals to keep the Lady Rebels in first place with a 2-0 victory over Hardin Valley Academy.

By Jamie Satterfield
satterfield@knoxnews.com
865-521-6519

Sports, 1C

The depth of the sprain, which could test the Vols’ wide receiver corps, became the second injury in 14 days for Tennessee’s Josh Smith.

Smith, who caught a touchdown pass in the Vols’ win against Florida last Saturday, suffered the initial injury last week against South Carolina.

CROSSWORD COMICS

Sports, 1C

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Today: KnoxNews.com

Problem shuts down SNS

Replacement needed for key vessel

By Frank Munger
fmunger@knoxnews.com
865-220-8007

SNS

See SNS, 1A

CONGRESS DEBATES PLAN AGAINST MILITANTS

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama’s strategy to combat Islamic State extremists in Iraq and Syria, which they use to transport and train Syrian rebels.

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somedone chocolate and nuts to get them to stop playing. She wrote in a letter that both positive and negative be-
tier results on upcoming TACAP tests.
"I challenged the class to see who could stay on their desks the longest to get the reward the following assignment, the
Four students managed the task. Holloway, who was one of them, but she ended the experience without a piece of candy anyway. Holloway told reporters it was one problem. Jessika’s mother is upset that any-
to nuts on her daugh-
ter’s account.
At some point after Jessi-
ka gave the bath, she began experiencing an allergic reaction and told another stu-
dent to the school clinic — alone with no note of explanation — because Holloway was not there.
Lately this is hard for me. It is hard for me.
Holloway later insisted she asked Jessi-
ka if she was allergic to nuts. Jessika, 14, said yes. Candy. Jessika could not recall being told 1796 -
the teacher never men-
tioned nuts. Wilson seemed to credit Jessika’s account, noting in an email Monday to a single-grad-
er, “Please, don’t force me to believe a lie when she gave me candy.”
Jessika, who asked not to be named, was in East Tennessee Chil-

dren’s Hospital, suffering from anaphylactic shock.
Her mother said at the Knox County Law De-
partment’s office Monday that she was settle, paying the more than $13,100 in medical bills for Jessika’s treat-
ment. "She is the sole support of a fund for Jessika and awarded we have under $20,000 for attor-
ney’s fees for the current legal

Holloway did hold a conference with concerns of health.
COSTLY CLAIMS

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

By HERB FINCHER

The Beams reached a $120,000 settlement after fi  ling suit. Unlike workers’ compensation, which there was no warn-
ning letter to

The boys' parents sued

in an area with speed limits

A school bus on Martin HI Pike approaches the crosswalk last month at Bonny Kate Elementary School. Knox County paid

Teachers Rosetta Noble and Katie Washington sued after a student and a school employee

A school bus on Martin HI Pike approaches the crosswalk last month at Bonny Kate Elementary School. Knox County paid

The Beams reached a settlement in the court fi le.

The school had received

There were no pedestri-

The case of siblings

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Teenager Kathryn Pickens was hit in a No-

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Government pays in some odd ways, files show

**COSTLY CLAIMS** Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

Musk cleared of sex charge

**MANIC state lacked intent, defense said**

By Jamie Satterfield

Former Gov. Phil Bredesen, left; moderator Doug Blaze, center, dean of the University of Tennessee Law School; and Gov. Bill Haslam take part in a forum in support of Amendment 2 on Wednesday at the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at UT. The amendment, if approved in November, would maintain the governor’s ability to appoint judges to the Supreme Court or other state appellate courts, subject to confirmation by the state Legislature.

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**Amendment 2 touted**

Gov. Bill Haslam and his predecessor, Phil Bredesen, said Wednesday that a proposed constitutional amendment on the selection of appellate court judges provides clarity and accountability that is needed to keep the state’s judicial system fair and impartial.

Amendment 2 on the Nov. 4 ballot is close to the way Tennessee governors have operated for decades in selecting judges for the appellate courts and state Supreme Court, with the legislature later facing a retention election. With the amendment, the state Legislature would confirm or reject future gubernatorial appointees. Opponents feel the current state constitution says all judges are to be popularly elected — and they want to keep it that way.

Tennessee Supreme Court Chief Justice Sharon Lee shows off her sash and face that were painted on her by her judicial colleagues after she was sworn in Wednesday. Lee, chosen by fellow justices last month to serve a one-year term as chief justice, addressed pleas she has for her term. She would like a review of how tax dollars are spent in the court system, addressing greater use of technology, such as electronic filing systems.

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**UT students, AT&T reps paint The Rock as part of "ITCANWAIT" campaign**

Sitting in the box seat of the large crowd-pleasing surveillance platform, it is used to monitor large crowds like those at Neyland Stadium for football games and in parking lots and other crime hot spots to deter would-be criminals.

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**In My Lifetime**

Alex Dumas, 86, recalls how he came to be a book and teaching WWII, self-publishing himself to paint.

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**NEW HOSPITAL DETAILS**

Tennova Healthcare reduces height and proposes other changes for its $304 million replacement hospital planned for its West Knoxville campus.

BUSINESS, 1B

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**INFOMATION**

To subscribe: 865-521-8181 or 800-237-5821

mksat@knoxnews.com

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**Costly Claims**

Public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

By Jamie Satterfield

mksat@knoxnews.com

It was a first for both the Knoxville Police Department and a Maryville lawyer.

In June 2000, the platform of KPD’s Sky Watch aerial surveillance tower came crashing down, landing on the roof of a car at a West Knox County shopping center parking lot. James White’s phone rang with some startling news — the car was his and, for once, his then-teenage daughter was not to blame for the damage it sustained.

White’s daughter had managed to run into a lot of things since then, while White said in a recent interview with the News Sentinel, “But this one wasn’t her fault.”

A News Sentinel investigation of legal claims paid from the risk management funds of Knox County and the city of Knoxville turned up dozens of accidents involving governmental vehicles and equipment.

But in three years of legal claims, only this one involved Sky Watch, a piece of equipment the size of a small RV with a platform that extends 30 feet into the air. Equipped with four cameras, recording capabilities and room for an officer in the box-like platform, it is used to monitor large crowds like those at Neyland Stadium for football games and in parking lots and other crime hot spots to deter would-be criminals.

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**COSTLY CLAIMS**

public employees’ mistakes cost taxpayers millions

By Jamie Satterfield

mksat@knoxnews.com

**FALLEN POLICE TOWER TAB: $3,134**

Government pays in some odd ways, files show

By Georgiana Vines

Sitting in the box seat of the large crowd-pleasing surveillance platform, it is used to monitor large crowds like those at Neyland Stadium for football games and in parking lots and other crime hot spots to deter would-be criminals.
I received a call from someone telling me (a city demolition crew) was there, seeing the house and bringing it up to code. After an auction, the city's public service department billed the owner for $51,945, including a $550 tow and impound fee, and taxpayers kicked in the bill when police bust through the door and saw the Sky Watch footage on the reality show "Cops," but taxpayers foot the bill when police bust through the door and saw the Sky Watch footage on the reality show "Cops." The agency hoped it could use inmates to fix the building, but a report stated there wasn't a single prison with the skill to do it. A local company did the work instead, for a price tag of $700.

Carolyn Maples was none too happy when, she said, KPD officers "dragged" her from a car "at gunpoint," temporarily seizing her money, debit card and diamond bracelet during a home invasion in January 2022. She filed a risk management claim when police officers didn't return the bracelet. "The case is basically that KPD doesn't know what happened to the bracelet," a risk management report stated.

Maples collected $100 for the missing bangle.

As a result of the Seals collection, KPD now requires its computer operators to check for lien three days before an auction.

According to the city's Codes Enforcement Office, the house was condemned in 2003. In April 2020, the Better Business Bureau told Fairchild $22,500. As a result of the Seals collection, KPD now requires its computer operators to check for lien three days before an auction.

Carolyn Maples was one of two people who received a call that a man was sitting in the middle of what used to be my house." Monty Fairchild, Knoxvillemansioner

They got us on a technicality," Brace said. "We looked at it and made a change to close that risk." "They made us change the document," said the city has since changed the language in its procedures to ensure paper work to make clear no extensions on a demolition order will be granted absent a written notification from the city. "They made us change the document," said the city has since changed the language in its procedures to ensure paper work to make clear no extensions on a demolition order will be granted absent a written notification from the city.

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The city offered to replace the door, but Casey said it was an antique in keeping with the style of the 1940s home he and his wife had been renovating.

“They really short-changed us because it was an antique door,” Casey said. “At first, they wanted to send someone out to put some cheap plastic up.”

The city wound up paying the Casey’s $3,000. They still haven’t found a proper replacement.

“My wife and I just Band-Aided it for now,” he said.

KPD was wrong again a month later. This time, officers weren’t at the wrong house. They were at the wrong apartment complex.

Records don’t say why officers kicked in the door at the complex on Old Maynardville Pike or where the intended target was. There’s good reason, according to risk management documents.

Ginger Huskey, who handles such claims for the city, wrote in a report that KPD failed to fill out a report at the time of the incident “because the resident stated nothing needed to be reported and the property owner, on the other hand, warranted that her property was not cleared from the E-911 center computer.

“Two hours later, how law enforcement showed the arch would let her in if no one called back to say Monica got her belongings. Be sure to log your questions.

Price tag for the fumble? Just $216,684.

It wasn’t a wrong address.

Reason that cause that cost Knox County $216,684 when the Knox County Sheriff’s Office, in a report April 10 from Knoxville Mayor’s office.

Deputies were dispatched to a Monarch’s house when his girlfriend visited the caller. She was upset but got her belongings. Before they arrived, though, she alerted Monarch’s brother, who isn’t identified in county records. It took him an hour to clear the house.

“We started skidding,” Ball told the News Sentinel. “The cart landed was about 6 inches fortunate because where I landed was about 6 inches.”

The body of the cart landed on my ankle.”

In a report on Brewer’s accident, a Three Ridges employee wrote that his wreck was the only one on that path. But Voiles’ crash had occurred just two weeks before.

After Ball’s accident, Three Ridges management ordered a review of the cart path by an engineer. The engineer recommended the path be improved along the safety wall and provide protective railing at the curve at the end of the path.

“The repairs weren’t finished until 20 weeks after Ball’s crash. Michael Grider, spokesman for Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett, said interim corrective measures were taken as the county had no other resources on the path since Ball’s cart over- turned.

“It’s a safe, usable path,” Grider said. The lawsuit was filed in Knox County on separate costs in August and September.

The court said in the records reviewed by the News Sentinel for those two drivers.

Two competitors had been well over the $1,031 in damages. The lawsuit contended Knox County for more than $376,000.

Knox County via former Mayor Mike Ragsdale in 2005 signed a lease with Knox State Student Government for use by the County Clerk’s Office. It was the county’s way of trying to help the fledgling venture bring business to East Knoxville — a move that later proved unsuccessful. In 2005, Knox County Clerk Foster Arnett shut down the Knox Points satellite office. East Knoxville’s pastor, the Rev. James Di- vis, died out because the county had signed a 10-year lease. That case was settled for $165,000.

In 2001, attorney Herbert S. Moncier filed, on behalf of Environmental Targets & Post Control, a whistleblower lawsuit after the firm discovered two competitors had been overcharging the system for its services, and the law department refused to take action. The lawsuit contended the county had been overbilled $400,000.

Although there is no legal claim for its role in injuries to the drivers, there were two competitors had been overcharging the system for its services, and the law department refusal to take action. The lawsuit contended the county had been overbilling $400,000.

The county eventually joined in the fight, settling with the two guilty firms was reached. Under the Tennessee False Claims Act, Moncier’s client was entitled to a percentage of the damages for role in uncovering the fraud. The county eventually joined in the fight, settling with the two guilty firms was reached. Under the Tennessee False Claims Act, Moncier’s client was entitled to a percentage of the damages for role in uncovering the fraud.

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