

Court finds Tontitown mayor misused public funds for legal representation

by: Justin Trobaugh

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FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (KNWA/KFTA) — Tontitown Mayor Angela Russell was found by a Washington County court on Sept. 30 to have misused public funds to pay for private legal representation for herself and others in a lawsuit opposing the Eco-Vista landfill expansion.

A lawsuit filed by attorneys Joey McCutchen and Stephen Napurano on behalf of Washington County resident Mick Wagner originally alleged that Russell and the city of Tontitown improperly used taxpayer money to advance private interests.

According to the ruling, the court found that Russell violated Arkansas law by using more than \$15,000 of the city's funds to pay for the legal representation of Richard Mays Law Firm.

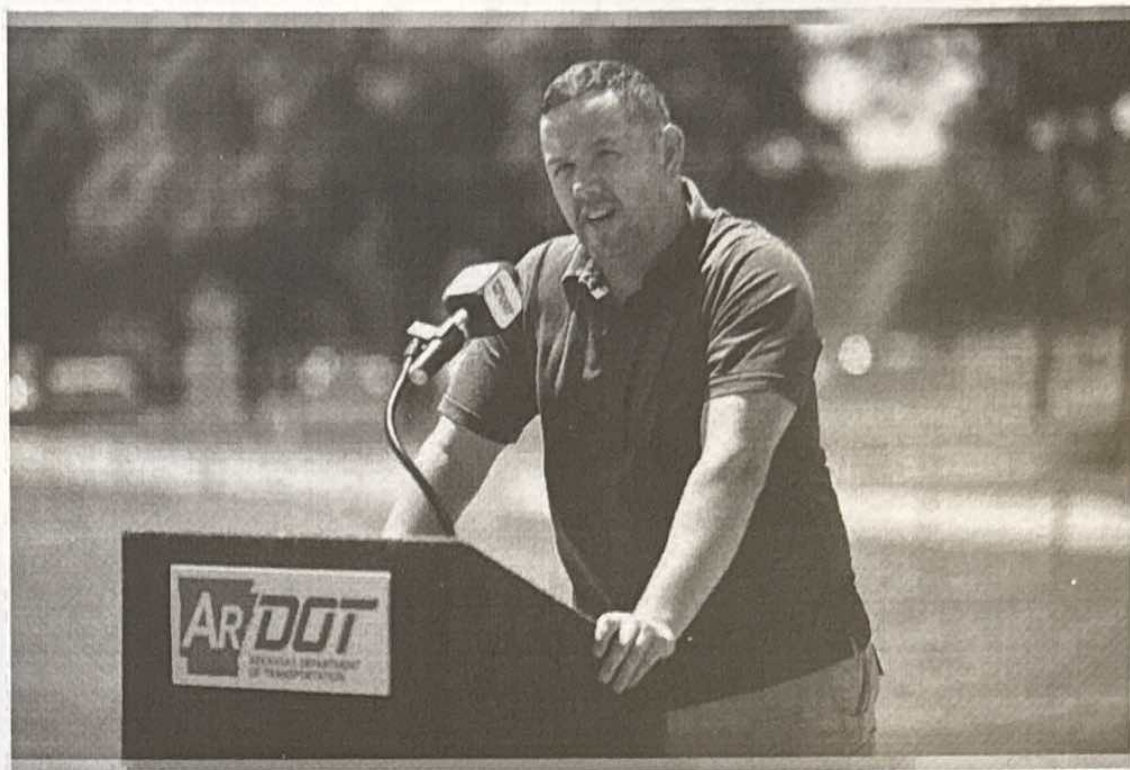
The court also finds that the city never entered into any engagement agreement with Mays. The ruling says that the work performed by the firm and paid for with taxpayer funds was conducted solely on behalf of individual petitioners in the Eco-Vista Landfill litigation and not on behalf of the city.

According to the ruling, Russell is ordered not to make similar uses of public funds for private purposes or to benefit private residents. She is also ordered to pay attorney's fees.

The city of Tontitown was originally involved in the suit, but was dismissed by the court.

Lowell council member files ethics complaint against may

22 hours, 12 minutes ago by Doug Thompson



LOWELL-- A City Council member filed an ethics complaint

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RE: Illegal Exaction Lawsuit – 72CV-25-26

Beginning in early ²⁴2004, I repeatedly addressed this council regarding Mayor Angela Russell's unlawful decision to use public funds to pay legal expenses for herself and other non-residents. Despite clear constitutional prohibitions, these expenditures continued without transparency or justification.

I submitted written documentation outlining how this constitutes an illegal exaction—defined under Article 16, § 13 of the Arkansas Constitution as the unlawful use of public funds for private purposes. This provision empowers any citizen to file suit to halt such misuse. Accordingly, I filed Case No. 72CV-25-26 on January 3, 2025, in Washington County Circuit Court.

While the city attorney has publicly addressed the WWA litigation (Case No. 72CV-25-1875, filed April 25, 2025), he has remained silent on my lawsuit. Under Arkansas Rule of Professional Conduct 1.4, attorneys are obligated to maintain reasonable communication with their clients—including the municipality—and to inform them of matters requiring informed consent. If the city attorney accepted service or remains involved in any capacity, he bears ethical responsibility to ensure the council is adequately informed.