



King County
Office of Risk Management Services
Department of Executive Services
King Street Center
201 South Jackson Street, Suite 320
Seattle, WA 98104
206-263-2250 Fax 206-296-0949
TTY Relay: 711

January 1, 2024

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove, Chair
King County Council
516 Third Ave, Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

RE: Quarterly Report of Closed Claims with Indemnity Payments of \$100,000 or More

Dear Councilmember Upthegrove:

I am pleased to transmit the quarterly report for the fourth quarter of 2023 summarizing claims that closed with an indemnity payment in the amount of \$100,000 or more. This report is transmitted pursuant to Ordinance 16913 adopted on August 27, 2010, which established a quarterly reporting requirement for the King County Risk Manager. This report describes the five claims that resolved from October 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, with an indemnity payment of \$100,000 or more.

Claimant: Wondie, Gizachew

Date of Loss: 12/06/2018

Closure Date: 12/08/2023

Indemnity Payment: \$225,000

Closure Method: Settlement

Claimant Gizachew Wondie alleged he was arrested due to a search warrant that was improperly obtained. In the federal criminal case that followed, federal district court judge Richard Jones found that King County Sheriff's Detective Kathleen Decker provided false testimony in a search warrant affidavit to arrest/search Gizachew Wondie. As a result, the federal charges were dismissed and Mr. Wondie sued King County, Detective Decker, and Deputy George Alvarez, who was the lead SWAT officer at the time of Woodie's arrest, for constitutional violations. Mr. Wondie spent less than a week in jail and was on electronic home detention for 18 months. Deputy Alvarez was previously dismissed from the lawsuit. The matter was settled for \$225,000.

Claimant: Muething, Thomas Alexander

Date of Loss: 10/23/2019

Closure Date: 12/15/2023

Indemnity Payment: \$117,500

Closure Method: Settlement

On October 23, 2019, Thomas Muething was travelling in his wheelchair on Tukwila International Blvd. A bomb squad Sheriff's Deputy drove slowly out of the park-and-ride lot to turn right onto Tukwila International Blvd. Construction materials and bushes obscured the Deputy's view and he did not see Mr. Muething on the sidewalk, traveling at approximately 6 mph. The Deputy's vehicle impacted Mr. Muething, who was not belted into his wheelchair. The collision caused him to be ejected from the chair and onto his right side. The wheelchair was damaged to the point of being a total loss. The County replaced the wheelchair at a cost of \$38,188.99 and disputed special medical damages totaled \$40,000. The case was settled in mediation for \$117,500.

Claimant: Vania Tzankov on behalf of the Estate of Stanimir Tzankov and Stephanie Carrillo

Date of Loss: 09/23/2020

Closure Date: 12/08/2023

Indemnity Payment: \$12,000,000

Closure Method: Settlement

King County Sheriff's deputies executed a writ of restitution (eviction order by the superior court) at the tenant's apartment when the tenant was not present. The tenant later returned and killed the maintenance manager, Stanimir Tzankov, and injured the property manager, Stephanie Carrillo. Plaintiffs alleged negligence and gross negligence against the County, claiming that the Sheriff's Office was aware of significant prior threats made by the tenant against the property staff. Both matters were mediated unsuccessfully, however, with follow-up between King County and the mediator, it resolved later for \$10,000,000 to the Estate of Stanimir Tzankov and \$2,000,000 to Stephanie Carrillo.

Claimant: Fisseha, Daniel and Gebreselassie, Berhanemeskel

Date of Loss: 05/05/2021

Closure Date: 12/13/2023

Indemnity Payment: \$150,000

Closure Method: Settlement

Current Metro employees Daniel Fisseha and Berhanemeskel Gebreselassie alleged discrimination and retaliation after being asked by their supervisor to use a private room to speak their native language, Amharic. A clarifying email from the Metro superintendent rescinded the misinformation about not speaking Amharic in the workplace, however King County's internal EEO Office investigation concluded with an adverse finding. Negative press also impacted this case. Plaintiffs claim that damages included mental health impacts and lack of promotion. The County settled the two cases for \$75,000 each (\$150,000 total) in mediation.

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Claimant: Gilbert, Cherry
Date of Loss: 02/28/2022
Closure Date: 12/15/2023

Indemnity Payment: \$100,000
Closure Method: Settlement

Metro bus driver Cherry Gilbert was engaged in a consensual, secret sexual relationship with a Metro coworker who was a Chief at different base from Ms. Gilbert. Ms. Gilbert alleged sexual harassment and failure to provide a safe working environment at King County Metro. Ms. Gilbert claimed that the relationship involved coercion, threats, and intimidation to control and extort money and gifts from her. Ms. Gilbert later alleged that she had disclosed the relationship to a Metro supervisor who did not investigate it, although that assertion was largely disproven. The County was able to settle the case prior to litigation for \$100,000.

I would be happy to answer any questions or provide a briefing for the Council on these claims at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Christine Oh
Director, Office of Risk Management Services

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff
 Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council
Karan Gill, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
Penny Lipsou, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Lorraine Patterson-Harris, County Administrative Officer, Department of Executive
 Services (DES)
Kimberly Frederick, Chief Civil Deputy, Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO)
Jessica Kozma, Litigation Section Head, PAO
Kymber Waltmunson, King County Auditor