



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

March 30, 2022

Former Mason and Gallaway Police Officers Indicted for Theft

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in the indictments of two police officers who worked for both the Town of Mason and City of Gallaway police departments until the summer of 2020.

Vatisha Barken was Mason's interim chief of police and a captain for the Gallaway Police Department. Samuel Sutton worked as a patrolman for the Mason PD and was a lieutenant for the Gallaway PD. The investigation began after officials and citizens from both municipalities reported concerns to the Comptroller's Office.

Investigators determined that Barken and Sutton falsified their timesheets and wrongfully obtained wages and/or salary and benefits from both Mason and Gallaway. Barken obtained a total of \$14,933.66, and Sutton received a total of \$20,568.42 in wrongful compensation.



The investigation revealed that Barken and Sutton submitted timesheets reflecting they were working for both Mason and Gallaway at the same time; that they ended one shift and started another in a different town in the same minute; and submitted timesheets reflecting hours worked when they had not reported they were in-service to either Fayette or Tipton County dispatchers.

The investigative report also notes unauthorized use of Gallaway and Mason police vehicles by Barken and Sutton; and it describes how Sutton had his personal vehicle towed to his personal residence in June 2020 and had the \$85 towing fee billed to the Gallaway Police Department.

Additionally, investigators are questioning the legitimacy of the remaining salaries and benefits paid to Barken and Sutton from January 2019 through July 2020 due to a variety of oddities and practices noted in the report.

On March 28, 2022, the Fayette County Grand Jury indicted Vatisha Barken and Samuel Sutton. Each are facing one count of theft over \$10,000, one count of official misconduct, and one count of false entry in governmental records.

"Local officials must ensure they carefully review timesheets to be certain that employees are actually working for the hours they claim," said Comptroller Jason Mumpower. "By asking questions and validating information, local governments can reduce the risk of improper payroll payments."

To view the investigative report, go to: <https://comptroller.tn.gov/office-functions/investigations/find.html>

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