



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Hancock County Commissioner

October 1, 2024

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JASON E. MUMPOWER
Comptroller

October 1, 2024

Mayor Thomas Harrison
1246 Main Street
Sneedville, TN 37869

Hancock County Management:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Hancock County Commissioner, and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy of the report is available for public inspection in our Office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Mumpower", is written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury

JEM/MLC

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Hancock County Commissioner

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance related to a Hancock County Commissioner. The investigation was limited to selected records for the period January 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 3rd Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



Hancock County (county) is located in northeast Tennessee and is governed by a mayor and 17 county commissioners who are elected to represent the seven districts within the county. The county commission serves a combined estimated population of less than 7,000. The county commission is the legislative body of the county and has the authority to levy property taxes, expend funds for lawful purposes, and is responsible for passing the county's annual budget. County policy does not require public advertisement and competitive bidding for purchases under \$10,000.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

1. HANCOCK COUNTY MADE PAYMENTS TOTALING AT LEAST \$10,349.33 TO A COUNTY COMMISSIONER RESULTING IN A POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

For the period January 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024, the county made at least two payments totaling \$10,349.33 to a county commissioner for construction projects, resulting in a potential conflict of interest. County commission minutes do not reflect that the payments were approved by the county commission. According to Tenn. Code Ann. § 12-4-101(a)(1) *et seq*:

“It is unlawful for any officer, committee member, director, or other person whose duty it is to vote for, let out, overlook, or in any manner to superintend any work or any contract in which any...county... shall or may be interested, to be directly interested in any such contract. “Directly interested” means any contract with the official personally or with any business in which the official is the sole proprietor, a partner, or the person having the controlling interest.”

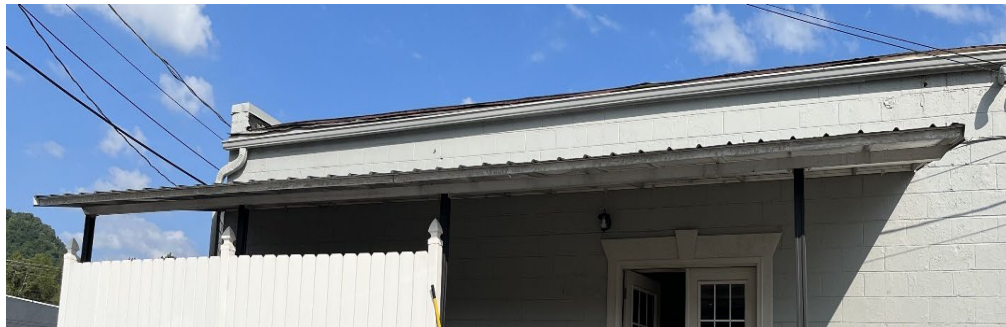
On April 16, 2024, the county paid the county commissioner \$3,193.93 to replace two awnings at adjoining county-owned buildings that house county offices and a private business (**Refer to Exhibits 1 and 2**).

Exhibit 1



*Awning constructed by the county commissioner in April 2024
at the front of a county-owned building that houses a private business*

Exhibit 2



*Awning constructed by the county commissioner in April 2024
at the rear of the county mayor's office*

On July 16, 2024, the county paid the county commissioner \$7,155.40 to pour a concrete pad at the county convenience center (**Refer to Exhibit 3**). According to the mayor and county commissioner, the county needed the pad constructed quickly for the installation of a new compactor at the convenience center that was purchased with grant funding.

Exhibit 3



*Concrete pad poured by the county commissioner in July 2024
at the county convenience center*

Conflicts of interest increase the risk of abuse and undue influence by individuals involved with procurement transactions. County officials should closely monitor transactions with vendors for potential conflicts of interest and compliance with required purchasing policies.

Summary of Payments to County Commissioner		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Work Performed</u>	<u>Amount</u>
4/16/2024	Two awnings at county-owned buildings	\$ 3,193.93
7/16/2024	Concrete pad at convenience center	\$ 7,155.40
Total		\$10,349.33