



COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Town of Normandy

January 12, 2024

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury



DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS



JASON E. MUMPOWER
Comptroller

January 12, 2024

Mayor Charles Whitaker
P.O. Box 68
Normandy, TN 37360

Mayor Charles Whitaker:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Town of Normandy, 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 17th 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", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jason E. Mumpower
Comptroller of the Treasury

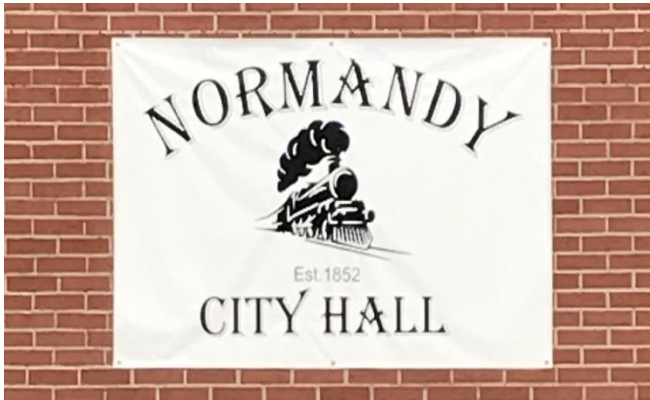
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INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Town of Normandy City Recorder

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance related to the Town of Normandy city recorder. The Comptroller's Office initiated the investigation after receiving allegations that the city recorder improperly paid herself 31 paychecks during the 2018 fiscal year (July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018). The investigation was limited to selected records for the period January 1, 2017, through September 30, 2022. The results of the investigation were communicated to the Office of the District Attorney General of the 17th Judicial District.

BACKGROUND



The Town of Normandy (town) city recorder (recorder) is appointed by the town's aldermen to hold a part-time position. The recorder's responsibilities are collecting, depositing, and recording all monies received by the town and paying the town's bills. According to the town's charter, the recorder is considered an alderman who takes official board meeting minutes and can vote on board business. The recorder, Jessica West, was appointed recorder during the

2015 fiscal year (July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015) and resigned in August 2022.

The town did not have a city hall until January 1, 2022. However, because of renovations underway inside the city hall building, town employees do not work in the building as of the release of this report. As such, West received a laptop from the town to facilitate remote work from home.

In early 2022, an auditor with the Comptroller of the Treasury's Division of Local Government Audit (LGA) contacted the mayor to inform them that the town was four years behind on their audit. The auditor explained to the mayor that she had previously tried to set up multiple meetings with the recorder on different dates at different times, but West always had a reason she could not meet to provide records for audit examination. LGA set up a meeting with the mayor to further discuss the situation. The mayor questioned West about this issue and stated that West needed to provide all documents to the town's CPA firm for their yearly audit. West advised that she provided some documents to the town's CPA firm in the summer of 2022 but failed to provide all required documentation for the audit.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

1. TOWN OF NORMANDY CITY RECORDER JESSICA WEST MISAPPROPRIATED TOWN FUNDS TOTALING \$8,643

From January 1, 2017, through September 30, 2022, West knowingly misappropriated town funds totaling \$8,643. West perpetrated her misappropriation by writing herself 24 extra paychecks totaling \$8,243. West also paid her personal Verizon cell phone bill with town funds on one occasion, totaling \$400.

A. West Misappropriated Town Funds by Paying Herself Extra Paychecks Totaling \$8,243.

West was approved to receive one monthly paycheck of \$334 from January 2017 to June 2018 and received a raise in July 2018, bringing her monthly salary to \$500 a month. The town does not require timesheets or process payroll taxes, and West was required to pay her own payroll taxes since the town considered her a 1099 employee. West exceeded her official power and routinely issued herself multiple paychecks per month without the approval or knowledge of the aldermen (**Refer to Exhibit 1, Exhibit 2, Exhibit 3, and Exhibit 4**).

West wrote herself 24 additional paychecks between January 25, 2017, and March 28, 2022. Of the 24 paychecks, 21 paychecks were written between January 25, 2017, and May 20, 2018. Additional paychecks were written on March 28, 2021, December 31, 2021, and March 28, 2022.

Exhibit 1



First paycheck to West in September 2017.

Exhibit 2

TOWN OF NORMANDY
GENERAL FUND
PO BOX 48
NORMANDY, TN 37130

2458
87-1207841

Date 9/8/17

Pay to the order of Jessica West \$335.00

Three hundred thirty five 0/100 Dollars

Traders Bank

For [redacted] [redacted] for West

Check 2458 Amount \$335.00 Date 9/8/2017

Second paycheck to West in September 2017.

Exhibit 3

TOWN OF NORMANDY
GENERAL FUND
PO BOX 48
NORMANDY, TN 37130

2459
87-1207841

Date 9-12-17

Pay to the order of Jessica West \$335.00

Three hundred thirty five 0/100 Dollars

Traders Bank

For [redacted] [redacted] for West

Check 2459 Amount \$335.00 Date 9/12/2017

Third paycheck to West in September 2017.

Exhibit 4

TOWN OF NORMANDY
GENERAL FUND
PO BOX 48
NORMANDY, TN 37130

2457
87-1207841

Date 9-21-17

Pay to the order of Jessica West \$335.00

Three hundred thirty five 0/100 Dollars

Traders Bank

For [redacted] [redacted] for West

Check 2457 Amount \$335.00 Date 9/21/2017

Fourth paycheck to West in September 2017.

B. West Misappropriated Town Funds by Paying Her Personal Verizon Cell Phone Bill Totaling \$400.

West knowingly used town funds to pay her personal cell phone bill to Verizon on one occasion. This electronic payment was made online to Verizon and totaled \$400 on June 11, 2018. The mayor and recorder were approved to receive a monthly phone allowance of \$40 starting in July 2017. However, West was not authorized to pay her personal phone bill (**Refer to Exhibit 5**).

Exhibit 5

Checking Account Transactions		
6/11/18	AUTOMATIC DEBIT	80.00 -
6/11/18	AUTOMATIC DEBIT VZ WIRELESS VE VZW WEBPAY	400.00 -
6/26/18	AUTOMATIC DEBIT	296.64 -

West's Verizon Wireless payment of \$400 for her personal cell phone bill.

Misappropriated Funds		
A)	Extra Paychecks	\$ 8,243
B)	Verizon Payment	400
	Amount of Misappropriation	\$ 8,643

2. WEST FALSIFIED THE MAYOR'S SIGNATURE ON CHECKS

From June 27, 2017, to May 20, 2018, West falsified the mayor's signature on eighteen checks written to herself without proper authority or permission. West issued herself and negotiated these checks in addition to her monthly paychecks.

On December 18, 2023, the Bedford County Grand Jury indicted JESSICA WEST on one count of Theft over \$2,500 or more but less than \$10,000 and one count of Forgery over \$10,000 or more but less than \$60,000.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment are merely accusations of criminal conduct, and not evidence. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and convicted through due process of law.

[Town of Normandy Investigative Exhibit](#)

INTERNAL CONTROL AND COMPLIANCE DEFICIENCIES

Our investigation revealed deficiencies in internal controls and compliance, some of which enabled West to perpetuate her scheme without proper detection. These deficiencies included:

Deficiency 1: Town officials did not ensure collections were deposited promptly

Town officials did not ensure that the recorder deposited collections no later than three working days after receipt of those funds by the recorder as required by Tenn. Code Ann. § 6-56-111. Depositing funds timely provides accountability and reduces the risks that undetected errors or misappropriations will occur. Investigators had access to a limited number of copies of the canceled checks that were deposited and found that only two within the investigative scope were deposited within three days. The other checks were deposited between four and 79 days after they were written.

Deficiency 2: Town officials did not provide adequate oversight and did not implement adequate segregation of financial duties

Town officials did not provide adequate oversight and did not separate financial duties. The recorder was responsible for receipting collections, preparing bank deposits, and reconciling receipts with bank deposits. Town officials are responsible for designing internal controls to give reasonable assurance of the reliability of financial reporting and the effectiveness and efficiency of operations. Separating financial duties and providing adequate oversight reduces the risk that errors or misappropriations will occur and remain undetected.

Deficiency 3: Town officials did not properly maintain board minutes

The mayor and board of aldermen held regular meetings but could not provide investigators with specific board meeting minutes. According to Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-44-104, the minutes are the official record of the board, should accurately reflect the board's actions, and should be properly recorded and maintained on file for review.

Deficiency 4: The recorder did not maintain all required records

Tenn. Code Ann. § 6-21-404 states the recorder “shall have custody of, and preserve in the recorder’s office..., all [other] records, papers, and documents, ... and shall keep an accurate and modern index thereof.” Investigators requested documents pertinent to this investigation, but the mayor could not produce all the records requested due to the recorder losing those records. Failure to retain required documents increases the risk of fraud, waste, or abuse.

Deficiency 5: Town officials circumvented internal controls by signing blank checks

Town officials signed blank checks in advance of issuance. Town officials failed to ensure that checks were completed and reviewed before being signed by two authorized signers. The recorder retained control of the town’s checkbook. The mayor stated that he would occasionally sign blank

checks and leave them with the recorder with the understanding that the checks were to be used for legitimate town business. Requiring two signatures on completed checks verifies that both signers agree that the payment is proper and reasonable.

Town officials indicated that they have corrected or intend to correct these deficiencies.
