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Claiborne County Commissioner Fails to Disclose Apparent Conflict of Interest *Commissioner Benefitted From Sale of Excavator to County*

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has revealed questionable transactions surrounding the sale and purchase of an excavator in Claiborne County.

Investigators determined a Claiborne County commissioner benefitted from the May 2016 sale of his cousin's used excavator to the county Sanitation Department. Even though the county commissioner abstained from voting to approve the purchase of the excavator, he failed to disclose that he would receive money from the transaction, and therefore had an apparent conflict of interest.



On May 3, 2016, Claiborne County issued a \$50,000 check to the commissioner's cousin for the excavator. Subsequently, the check was deposited by the county commissioner's wife and daughter into their joint bank account. On May 9, 2016, the wife and daughter transferred \$16,260.75 to pay a personal loan of the county commissioner, and the next day they transferred \$32,647.29 from their account into a joint bank account owned by the commissioner and his wife.

The solid waste director told investigators that he only dealt with the county commissioner during the process of purchasing the excavator.

During an interview with investigators, the county commissioner initially denied receiving money from the county's purchase of the excavator, but later admitted that he had received money after he was confronted with the bank transactions.

The commissioner stated he gave his cousin back the majority of the excavator sale proceeds in cash installments, with the exception of funds his cousin owed him from prior business dealings. Investigators were unable to determine the validity of those installments due to the cousin's death in February 2017.

Investigators also found the county paid for repairs on the excavator prior to purchasing it. Repairs should only be made on county-owned assets.

The findings and recommendations within this investigation have been shared with the district attorney general for the 8th Judicial District.

To view the investigation online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>

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