

DEMOCRAT

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Wilson County, director subjects of lawsuit

Former commissioner alleges toxic work environment, authoritarian behavior from supervisor

BY CHANDLER INIONS
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A former Wilson County judicial commissioner has filed a lawsuit against the county and her director alleging misconduct

and retaliatory behavior that created an inhospitable work environment, which ultimately resulted in her departure from the department.

That departure, according to

the plaintiff, Patricia Hamblin, was prompted by a simple message taken out of context by Wilson County Director of Judicial Commissioners Lisa Coltigrone.

The lawsuit against Wilson County and Coltigrone was filed last week in U.S. District Court Middle District of Tennessee Nashville Division by Hamblin.

According to the lawsuit

obtained by the *Democrat*, Hamblin was employed as a judicial commissioner after being appointed by the Wilson County Commission to a four-year term ending in March 2022.

A judicial commissioner's role includes issuance of search warrants, appointment of attorneys, setting and approving bonds.

Hamblin has served as a judicial commissioner since her first appointment in March of 2010.

She was subsequently appointed to hold the position in 2014 and again in 2018.

The lawsuit states that through her tenure until the time of her 2021 termination, Hamblin was "never disciplined or otherwise reprimanded for her performance."

Due to county judicial commissioners being appointed for

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Wilson County Board of Education makes masks optional

Move follows direction from state legislators establishing virus thresholds for face coverings

BY CHANDLER INIONS
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In anticipation of a new bill's passing that establishes permissible mask mandate thresholds, the Wilson County Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to remove the mask requirements during its meeting on Wednesday.

The matter comes as the school board sought to stay out in front of the legislation from Nashville, which passed to the Governor's office but remained unsigned by Gov. Bill Lee. It may not actually matter if Lee signs it though as no action for 10 days yields the same result, with the bill becoming a law.

That bill prohibits the establishment of mask requirements in any Tennessee school district unless two criteria are met. First, there must be a rolling, average 14-day COVID-19 infection rate of at least 1,000 cases per 100,000 residents while the state is under a state of emergency.

In such an event, mask mandates would not be guaranteed as the decision to implement masks has to go through a school's principal first. That principal would then request a mandate to the school board, where if it was approved would only apply to the specific school for no greater than



Submitted
Students will still be permitted to wear masks in the classroom if they or their parents so choose. However, unless a state of emergency is declared and a countywide threshold of 1,000 cases per 100,000 residents is breached, no new mask requirements will be permitted under state law.

two weeks. The decision to transition the rule to fit the forthcoming bill is just the school board's way of staying out in front of the state law.

"You're doing some stop-gap action here," said Wilson County Attorney Mike Jennings. "I don't think there is any doubt the law is going to come into play, but it's not in play right now, and the board won't meet again until after it comes into play."

Wilson County Director of Schools Jeff Luttrell added, "What we're doing now, if this new bill becomes law, puts us in line with state law."

The discussion transitioned toward specific language in the rules that had been regulating face coverings thus far into the school year.

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Submitted
Following a recent decision by Wilson County Schools, masks will now be optional for students attending class. The decision came on the heels of legislation from Nashville that set lofty thresholds for implementing any new face-covering requirements.

Milele discusses redistricting, growth with residents

BY MIGUEL DETILLIER
FOR THE DEMOCRAT

MT. JULIET — Mt. Juliet District 4 Commissioner Jennifer Milele discussed redistricting and Mt. Juliet's growth with residents during Thursday evening's town hall meeting, which was held at Grace Baptist Church.

Milele presented the three options of the city's redrawing of its voting districts to 26 residents at the church's cafe. In all of those options, the entire western portion from South Mt. Juliet Road will be redrawn into District 3.

Milele said that would cause her to lose Providence Marketplace and all commercial buildings north of Providence Parkway and along Belinda Parkway.

"I don't see any other way to change it because of the numbers," said Milele.

Milele and the rest of the Mt. Juliet Board of Commissioners will plan on hosting its second work session over the redrawing of the four city districts on Nov. 22. The commissioners will vote on their final redrawing of the city in this session.

City officials look at Mt. Juliet's redistricting plans as an effort to balance out its population.

Milele addressed her district's current growth by going over the current progress of Providence Central, a multi-use development on 250 acres near Adams Lane, Central Pike and Providence Parkway. The development includes the Enclave of Providence Apartments, which is expected to have eight buildings and 296 apartment units.

Last July, Cumberland Advisors — a Nashville-based real-estate developer — broke ground on this development. They added that a 12,000 square-foot commercial building will be built along with the apartment units, though no users have been identified for the commercial building.

Leasing for the first apartment units is estimated to start next summer, with completion expected by 2023.

SEE MILELE/PAGE A7

Lebanon City Council approves airport lease

SAG Properties will now control and develop west side lot C

BY CHANDLER INIONS
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Thanks to a new lease agreement approved by the Lebanon

City Council on Tuesday, the city's municipal airport should soon be getting a facelift.

In a unanimous show of

approval, a lease agreement for the corporate aircraft hangar west side lot C found favor with the city and will soon pass to the care of SAG Properties, LLC.

The city expressed intent that this portion of the airport should be devoted to business

aircraft of companies that will encourage the economic development and prosperity of Lebanon and Wilson County.

The agreement extends a 40-year lease to SAG Properties that officially commences on

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Darlene Higgenbottom

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