

Shawnee County scores legal win over property taxes

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Topeka Capital-Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Shawnee County got a legal win after the Kansas Court of Appeals sided with it when it appealed a ruling claiming they violated the law during a Revenue Neutral Rate public hearing.

Rep. Kenneth Corbet, R-Topeka, filed the original complaint against the county. When The Capital-Journal asked about this most recent ruling, he said he hadn't read it yet but does intend to file an appeal.

The Capital-Journal also reached out to the county for comment.

"The County appreciates the Court of Appeals' unanimous decision confirming that the Board of County Commissioners strictly complied with every requirement of the revenue neutral rate statute," Amanda Monhollon said in a written statement. "We have remained confident in this outcome from the start and this ruling fully confirms the Board of County Commissioners' actions."

What happened at Shawnee County's RNR meeting that resulted in legal action?

On July 20, 2023, the Shawnee County Commission held a revenue neutral rate public hearing, which was to vote on whether to exceed property tax col-



The Court of Appeals of the State of Kansas gave Shawnee County a legal win. PROVIDED BY SHAWNEE COUNTY/2022

lections for 2024.

In that meeting, the commission was accused of holding the public hearing without a vote, adjourning the hearing, which resulted in spectators leaving and then reopening the meeting to vote.

In March 2024, the Board of Tax Appeals of the State of Kansas found Shawnee County Commission had violated state law. This would mean the county would have to pay back about \$6 million in property taxes to residents.

Some Ukrainians refuse to leave as war drags on

Anatolii Stepanov

REUTERS

DOBROPILLIA, Ukraine – Kateryna Lomova, 97, stood her ground as police rescuers and family members begged her to evacuate her ramshackle home in an area of eastern Ukraine battered by Russian artillery, bombs and drones fired from some 9 miles away.

"No, no – I won't go right now," said Lomova, hunched in her doorway, wearing a bright green headscarf and wrapped in thick layers of mismatched clothes. "Maybe another time, but not now."

Lomova's home lies on the outskirts of Dobropillia, one of many towns and villages in the Donetsk region wrecked by years of heavy Russian bombardment and now facing increased danger as Moscow's troops grind ever closer.

The White Angel rescue team, armed with shotguns and beeping drone monitoring devices, has been driving around the Dobropillia area searching for potential evacuees as artillery rumbles in the distance.

The main road is shrouded in netting to defend against drones that roam the skies with deadly agility and accuracy – the leading cause of

death in front-line areas. Burnt-out cars and destroyed homes line the route.

Some residents seem eager to leave but a few are still refusing to budge, often because they are sick, elderly or have no family or means to live elsewhere. In Lomova's case, a relative in Spain sought to reassure the frail woman over a video call that she could, possibly, make her way across Europe to join the family.

"We'll figure it out – first just leave Dobropillia," the relative, Liudmyla, told Lomova as the armed, camouflage-clad crew looked on. "We're all worried about you."

The White Angel crew, part of the regional police force, offered to drive Lomova to the nearby hub of Kramatorsk, where volunteers would in turn shuttle her about 60 miles away to the city of Pavlohrad. But she refused.

Nearly four years into Russia's full-scale invasion, President Vladimir Putin is demanding that Ukraine give up the whole Donbas – an industrialized swath of eastern Ukraine comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk regions – as one of his conditions for ending the war, something Kyiv refuses to do.

Hearing

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Boyd's widower, Adan Manzano, 27, subsequently was killed last February while in New Orleans to cover the Super Bowl.

Here's what happened in the crash

Armstrong faces charges linked to a two-vehicle crash about 7:50 a.m. on April 11, 2024, that killed Boyd, 24, a second-grade teacher at Lowman Hill Elementary School.

An eastbound Nissan Versa driven by Boyd and a westbound Ford F-150 pickup truck driven by Armstrong collided head-on that day in the 7800 block of S.W. 53rd, authorities said.

Armstrong and Boyd's daughter, then an infant, were injured but survived.

Armstrong is charged with vehicle homicide, driving on the left side of the roadway and speeding 63 mph in a 45 mph zone.

Vehicular homicide is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to 12 months in jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500, as well as a mandatory license driver's restriction or revocation.

Blood sample won't be admitted as evidence

Defense attorney Kevin Shepherd, representing Armstrong, filed a motion Sept. 29 asking that a warrantless blood sample drawn from Armstrong and provided to a Shawnee County Sheriff's deputy after the crash not be admitted as evidence in the case.

The blood draw indicated cocaine metabolites were found in Armstrong's system.

Shepherd also asked that a specific Shawnee County Sheriff's deputy be prohibited from testifying regarding whether Armstrong may have been intoxicated.

Watson granted both requests Dec. 9 after Megan Weddle, deputy district attorney, said prosecutors didn't plan to call that deputy as a witness or seek to have the blood sample admitted as evidence.

Shepherd also asked at the Dec. 9 hearing that evidence from a urine drug screen acquired by the prosecution — after being obtained through the routine business practices of Stormont Vail Health, where Armstrong was taken after the crash — not be admitted. That screen also showed evidence of cocaine metabolites in Armstrong's system.

"The metabolite-only urine result, with unknown time of consumption

The case against Armstrong was initially assigned to Shawnee County District Magistrate Judge Christopher Turner, who resigned effective Dec. 5.

and screening methodology, is not probative of impairment at the time of driving and invites unfair prejudice and speculation," Shepherd wrote in a court document submitted last month. "It must be excluded, and law enforcement testimony suggesting impairment from such a screen should be precluded."

Weddle indicated at the Dec. 9 hearing that the prosecution intended to provide expert witness testimony at trial regarding the drug screen evidence and its relevance to the case.

Watson then scheduled the matter to be taken up during a Daubert hearing April 16.

Victim's husband died of homicide last February

Boyd's husband, Marzano, was found dead Feb. 5 in his hotel room in New Orleans, where he was on assignment covering the Super Bowl for Tele-mundo Kansas City, which employed him as an anchor and reporter.

Authorities said Manzano died from the combined toxic effects of Xanax and alcohol intoxication, along with positional asphyxia, after he was drugged and robbed. Manzano was found lying face down on a pillow.

Danette Colbert, Rickey White and Christian Anderson face pending manslaughter charges linked to Manzano's death.

Judge who initially was hearing case has resigned

The case against Armstrong was initially assigned to Shawnee County District Magistrate Judge Christopher Turner, who resigned effective Dec. 5.

Turner's LinkedIn page says he became director of leadership management and membership services for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, where he was director of enforcement data and judicial outreach before becoming a judge in 2022.

Applications from anyone seeking Turner's vacated judgeship will be accepted through noon Dec. 16.

Contact Tim Hrenchir at threnchir@gannett.com or 785-213-5934.

Cities

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The dimensions WalletHub chose closely resemble the "seven deadly sins" identified since early Christian times as being greed, lust, envy, wrath, pride, sloth and gluttony.

What were the nation's most and least sinful cities?

WalletHub identified the nation's most sinful cities are being, in order:

- Las Vegas.
- Houston.
- Los Angeles.
- Philadelphia.
- Atlanta.

Las Vegas had a score of 61.94 points.

The least sinful cities were identified, in order, as being the following:

- Columbia, Maryland.
- Madison, Wisconsin.
- Pearl City, Hawaii.
- West Valley City, Utah.
- Fremont, California.

Columbia, Maryland, had a score of 23.95 points.

Why did Wichita finish 39th and Overland Park 166th?

The two Kansas communities included on the list were Wichita, the state's largest city in population, and Overland Park, its second largest. Both are among the nation's 150 most-populated cities.

Wichita's 2025 ranking of 39th overall suggested it has seen increased debauchery since finishing with a ranking of 51st from WalletHub in 2024.

Overland Park's ranking of 166th overall this year was lower than the ranking of 146th it received from WalletHub in 2024.

Overland Park this year received a score of 30.21, finishing 18th in greed, 132nd in anger and hatred, 157th in jealousy, 160th in lust and 169th in excesses and vices.

These 37 metrics were considered

Two metrics were considered as part of the 14.3% of a city's possible score in the "vanity" dimension, with both contributing as many as 7.15

points toward its total score. Those metrics were tanning salons per capita and Google search interest index for "top 5 plastic surgeries."

Three metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "greed" dimension, with each contributing as many as 4.77 points toward a city's total score. Those metrics were casinos per capita, share of adults with gambling disorders and charitable donations as share of income.

Three metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "jealousy" dimension, with each contributing as many as 4.77 points toward a city's total score. Those metrics were thefts per 1,000 residents, identity thefts per capital and fraud and other complaints per capita.

Four metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "lust" dimension, with each contributing as many as 3.58 points toward the city's total score. Those metrics were teen birth rate, adult entertainment establishments per capita, Google search interest for "XXX Entertainment" and Google search traffic for the term "Tinder."

Six metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "laziness" dimension, with each contributing as many as 2.38 points toward the city's total score. Those metrics were volunteer rate, high school dropout rate, average weekly hours worked, disconnected youth (16-24), share of adults not exercising and average daily time spent watching TV.

Nine metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "anger and hatred" dimension, with each contributing as many as 1.59 points toward the city's total score. Those metrics were bullying rate, numbers of mass shootings, presence of terrorist attacks, sex offenders per capita, hate groups per capita, hate-crime incidents per capita, deaths due to firearms per capita, violent crimes per 1,000 residents and aggravated assault offenses known to law enforcement per 1,000 residents.

Ten metrics contributed to the 14.3% of the possible score in the "excesses and vices" dimension, with each contributing as many as 1.43 points toward the city's total score. Those metrics were excessive drinking, drug overdose deaths, debt-to-income ratio, share of adult smokers, share of obese adults, share of adult coffee drinkers, share of population using marijuana, fast-food establishments per capita, DUI-related fatalities per capita and retail opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons.

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