



County Board members critical of Prenzler in release

by Press Release

March 24 2016 12:55 PM

FROM THE OFFICE OF ALAN DUNSTAN

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EDWARDSVILLE – After learning that Madison County Treasurer Kurt Prenzler, prior to his 2014 re-election as Treasurer, refused to accept an offer of \$60,000 to settle a discrimination lawsuit filed by a disabled female employee in his office, Republican and Democratic county board members have demanded answers from Prenzler.

The case went to trial earlier this year and a jury in federal court in Benton, IL rendered a verdict against Prenzler, awarding the former employee \$450,000 and requiring Madison County pay all the plaintiff's legal expenses and back pay to the former employee that could grow the verdict and legal fees to as much as \$1,000,000.

Based on financial information shared with the Finance Committee during a review of the case, it was revealed in open session that Prenzler refused to accept a recommendation to settle the case prior to his 2014 Treasurer re-election for \$60,000, during a mediation held by the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Committee members were informed that since it became a federal lawsuit in December

of 2014, a month after Prenzler's re-election as Treasurer, the county has paid attorneys defending Prenzler in excess of \$180,000, more than three times the \$60,000 cost which



would have res

olved the case without litigating it.

"Members of both parties recognize how terrible this situation has become," Republican County Board Member Bill Meyer said. "There is no excuse for discriminating against any employee, much less a disabled employee."

Meyer said he is bothered by the timing of Prenzler's decisions. "He had the opportunity to settle this case prior to his 2014 election and for political reasons chose not to, and it has cost the taxpayers greatly. Now he says he wants to appeal the verdict, conveniently before his 2016 election campaign for Chairman. Prenzler is apparently holding out hope he can salvaging his image by pushing this case past yet another one of his election campaigns through an expensive appeal," Meyer stated, pointing out the legal expenses associated with taking the case to appeal could require the county to pay both sides legal fees, which would be excessive.

"How many more of Kurt Prenzler's politically motivated, costly decisions are the taxpayers going to tolerate," Meyer added.

County Board member Brenda Roosevelt called into question Prenzler's judgement in originally creating this liability for Madison County, "I believe Mr. Prenzler owes the people of Madison County an explanation for his discriminatory actions against a female

employee. This entire situation could have been avoided if Mr. Prenzler had respected the rights of this woman.”

“Now, a jury has found him guilty and the taxpayers are going to have to pay the price for his bad judgment,” Roosevelt continued. “Unfortunately, he (Prenzler) continues to compound his awful choices as treasurer by making this poor woman wait for justice, and by causing the cost of this whole situation to spiral out of control for taxpayers.”

Finance Committee Chairman Jack Minner was critical of Prenzler’ s decision not to settle the suit, as recommended by his lawyers, and his refusal to get the county out of the lawsuit when he had an opportunity to do so at less than a third of the cost of what was spent in the county’s attorney’s fees. “Had Mr. Prenzler reviewed the facts of the case, admitted his responsibility and accepted the advice of his legal counsel to settle, it would have saved Madison County taxpayers at least a half-million dollars,” Minner stated.