

Haine: Multiple Lawsuits Filed By Dorman and Hulme Cost Taxpayers More Than \$250,000 In Legal Fees

by Submitted by Madison County State's Attorney's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County taxpayers have been forced to expend more than a quarter of a million dollars merely to defend against more than a dozen failed lawsuits filed by only two former county employees.

“It’s a sadly typical case of frivolous lawsuits driving up costs for taxpayers,” said Haine. “I hope it stops soon, so local taxpayers don’t continue to suffer this waste of resources merely to ward off meritless lawsuits by just two individuals.” As of mid-August, the county’s legal fees to defend against litigation brought by former county administrator Doug Hulme and former information technology director Robert Dorman stood at \$271,568.43.

Dorman and Hulme were employed as top appointees of County Board Chairman Prenzler in 2016. After an investigation into acts of malfeasance while in those roles, their employment was terminated by the County Board in 2020. Since then, Dorman, Hulme or both are plaintiffs in 18 separate cases in which the defendant is Madison County or a county office. Some cases have involved more than 30 defendants. The defendants have included Madison County, County Board members, the State’s Attorney’s Office, an assistant state’s attorney, the sheriff, the treasurer, the auditor and a judge. Despite their voluminous filings, Dorman and Hulme have lost case after case against the County. None of their cases has even advanced beyond the “pleading stage,” or the very beginning of the case. In nine cases, the County has won outright dismissals before the case advanced at all.

Additional motions to dismiss are pending in four others. Other cases remain pending. They have even appealed several of their losses, and have lost every time on appeal. In one of the cases, *Dorman v. Madison County Treasurer* (22-MR-288), the judge made a specific finding that the litigation was frivolous, stating in a court order that it was filed “without a legal basis, in bad faith and for the purposes of harassment.” The judge presiding in that case has granted a motion by the county to impose sanctions against Dorman, requiring him to pay the county’s legal fees associated with that particular suit. Those fees in 22-MR-288 are roughly \$4,800. These Pursuing truth and seeking justice through application of law. 157 North Main Street, Suite 402, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025 (618) 692-6280 www.madcosao.gov sanctions are far greater than Dorman’s only arguable litigation success against the County, a case that was dismissed as moot but for which Dorman was awarded \$1,000 for expenses. He appealed that award, and lost on appeal. Defending these various lawsuits are not the only cost to county taxpayers associated with the ongoing actions of Dorman and Hulme. Dorman, Hulme and a family member of Dorman have, combined, submitted more than 200 Freedom of Information Act requests to county officials. The county’s total for legal fees associated with Dorman-Hulme litigation does not include costs for processing the FOIA requests.

“At the same time that they are pursuing dozens of lawsuits against the county and various county officials, these individuals have filed hundreds of wide-ranging requests under the Freedom of Information Act against multiple county offices, each of which has to be reviewed and in some cases processed by a staff attorney,” Haine said. “The

State's Attorney's Office has had to devote hundreds of hours to reviewing and processing those requests." Haine continued, "The County very happily answers many FOIA requests every month from citizens seeking information about how their government is operating. That is a good thing, because transparency is key to good government. But FOIA should not be used as a tool to merely harass government offices or to try to soak up their resources and distract their operations. Such actions abuse the spirit of FOIA and waste significant taxpayer-funded time and resources."