

Waco Tribune-Herald

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In God we trust



Sunny ■ High: 96 ■ Low: 72

Deputies to receive \$2 million in lawsuit

County to pay \$575K as part of settlement in discrimination case

By CASSIE L. SMITH
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Nine current and former McLennan County sheriff's deputies will receive \$2 million after a discrimination lawsuit was settled, and the county must pay almost \$600,000 of that sum.

The commissioners court approved Tuesday paying \$575,000 to settle a discrimination law-

suit brought by the nine deputies against the county and Sheriff Parnell McNamara.

The rest of the settlement will be paid by the Texas Association of Counties Risk Management Pool, the county's insurance group, which the county contributes to, along with other Texas counties.

Herbert Bristow, the attorney representing the county, said the



McNamara

settlement comes as a result of a compromise and not an admission of guilt. Bristow said there were more than 200 witnesses in the case, which has been ongoing for about 18 months.

The plaintiffs alleged McNamara fired or demoted them in retaliation because they supported his 2012 primary opponent, former Chief Sheriff's Deputy Randy Plemons. They claimed their First Amendment rights were violated and were seeking damages including back pay and lost wages.

McNamara contended that as

the newly elected officeholder he had the right to organize his department and command structure as he saw fit.

Jury selection in the trial was set to begin Aug. 14.

The plaintiffs were Jimmie Channon, W. Derick Johnson, William L. McKamey, Anthony W. McRae, J.C. Riggs, Norman Wade, Bull E. Barrow, William Gorham and Leonard Tusa.

Channon said he is glad to get the matter behind him and move on with his life. Channon, who now works for the U.S. Marshals Service, said he still has many

friends in the sheriff's office and wished them all well. He said he worked at the sheriff's office for 24 years.

Attorney Don Tittle, who represents the plaintiffs, said the settlement reinforces a public employee's right to support the candidate of his choice during an election without repercussions. Tittle said he thinks this is the largest settlement of its kind in Texas.

"Since this lawsuit was filed, the nine plaintiffs, with over 130

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LAWSUIT

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years of law enforcement experience between them, have had to endure accusations that their case lacked merit, along with suggestions that it was a frivolous lawsuit," Tittle said.

"The payments totaling \$2 million on behalf of McNamara and the county to the plaintiffs provide strong vindication of what they've been saying all along.

"These nine guys are some of the finest and most experienced law enforcement officers I've ever known, and it's a shame that they are no longer serving the citizens of McLennan County."

County Judge Scott Felton said the settlement was not necessarily about who is right or wrong, but about financial risk.

"We think that there are many benefits of getting this issue behind us," he said during Tuesday's commissioners court meeting.

McNamara told the court that he stands behind his

improvement goals.

"I am relieved my troops can turn their focus completely back on the office," he said.

But the sheriff maintained that if the case had gone to trial, the jury would have believed that his decisions were not based on politics.

County Auditor Stan Chambers said he will bring a line-item transfer request before the court next week to cover the funding needed for the settlement.



Texas Lottery Results

TUESDAY'S DRAWINGS

Cash 5: 6-7-9-15-23
Mega Millions: 14-18-22-31-47
Mega Ball: 15

MONDAY'S CASH 5

Winning numbers: 1-4-11-19-36
Match 5: 1 (\$18,047)
Match 4: 60 (\$135)
Match 3: 1,886 (\$10)
Match 2: 19,110 (\$2)

MONDAY'S TEXAS 2-STEP

Numbers: 3-7-12-22 Bonus: 35
Match 4 plus Bonus: 0
Match 4: 9 (\$2,405)
Match 3 plus Bonus: 59 (\$45)
Match 3: 2,157 (\$17)
Match 2 plus Bonus: 1,193 (\$20)
Match 1 plus Bonus: 7,566 (\$7)
Match Bonus: 12,564 (\$5)
Estimated next jackpot: \$1 million