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**Judge tosses Hulme's and Dorman's latest lawsuit;
costs to taxpayers now exceed \$480,000**

Edwardsville, IL — An out-of-county judge has issued an order dismissing a lawsuit filed by two former Madison County administrators, Doug Hulme and Rob Dorman, whose employment was terminated in 2020. Since then, after more than a dozen failed lawsuits by only these two former county employees, Madison County taxpayers have been forced to expend more than \$480,000 merely to successfully defend these cases in court.

Circuit Judge Zachary Schmidt issued an order on May 31 dismissing a suit brought by Hulme and Dorman against Madison County and several current and former county officials and employees, as well as a retired judge. Judge Schmidt is a circuit judge in Greene County, and was assigned per a request by the Chief Judge of the 3rd Judicial Circuit, which covers Madison County. Judge Schmidt's dismissal order was issued in 23-LA-1119, in which the plaintiffs alleged in a 92-page lawsuit that their firings were improper and part of a conspiracy.

In the dismissal order, the judge wrote that the plaintiffs "failed to plead the elements of a conspiracy, in that they just generally and vaguely charge that the individuals participated in a conspiracy but do not plead facts supporting this allegation. Plaintiffs fail to plead who did what, and in furtherance of any agreement. This Court cannot discern, even from 92 pages of Plaintiffs' Complaint, what the conspiracy was, and who took actions in furtherance of it."

Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine commended the work of his office's Civil Division, which has coordinated the county's defense against the Dorman-Hulme litigation.

"Time and time again, the Courts have dismissed the pleadings of these two serial failed litigants," Haine said. "But unfortunately, their frivolous lawsuits have still cost the County hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal expenses due to the volume of their filings. It's a tragic waste, to say the least. I hope it stops soon, but in the meantime, I commend our legal team for their successes and hard work. We will always aggressively defend the taxpayers of Madison County against meritless lawsuits."

To date, the County's legal expenses in defending against Dorman-Hulme lawsuits have exceeded \$480,000. Since 2020, Dorman, Hulme or both have filed 20 legal actions against the County or County officials. 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. More than 15 of those have been resolved in favor of the County or County officials. 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. Other cases remain pending. Hulme and Dorman have appealed several of their losses, and have lost every time on appeal.

Courts have even imposed sanctions against both Dorman and Hulme (\$17,358.75 against Dorman; and \$9,630.75 against Hulme). In one of those cases where sanctions were imposed, the Court made a specific finding that Dorman's suit was frivolous, stating in a court order that it was filed "without a legal basis, in bad faith and for the purposes of harassment." These 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.

Despite these losses and sanctions, Hulme and Dorman have flooded the county with hundreds of Freedom of Information Act requests over the same period of time. Records show that in just the past three years Dorman, Dorman's spouse, and Hulme alone have filed more than 250 Freedom of Information Act requests to county officials. For example, in just the four-month period from February through May of this year, Dorman and Hulme have filed at least 14 FOIA requests with county offices. On top of that, during the same four-month period, Dorman and Hulme have filed at least six FOIA appeals with the Illinois Attorney General's Office, seeking reviews of county responses to the pair's FOIA requests.

Sheriff Jeff Connor and Treasurer Chriss Slusser are among the numerous officials named in Hulme-Dorman lawsuits.

Connor said: "Even though this litigation was without merit, I'm grateful for the State's Attorney's vigorous defense against it. As we work to fulfil our mission of reducing crime and enhancing public safety, it's unfortunate that the County has had to expend valuable resources to defend against these types of lawsuits.

Slusser said: "Madison County residents' tax dollars would be better spent on keeping our neighborhoods safe, growing our communities and providing essential services to constituents. I commend the State's Attorney's efforts to end the frivolous lawsuits from these two disgraced former county officials."