

THE PIONEER NEWS

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 WWW.PIONEERNEWS.NET VOL. 143, No. 89 \$2

Fired MW employee receives \$1.6 million from jury

THOMAS J. BARR
THE PIONEER NEWS

MOUNT WASHINGTON – A 12-member jury panel has awarded a former employee of Mount Washington city government over \$1.6 million after hearing more than a week of testimony.

Lori Puchino, who served 10 years as the city's community planning and development director, was terminated on Jan. 5, 2023, by new mayor Stuart Owen.

She filed a civil lawsuit that she was terminated due to age and gender discrimination by Owen, who had just started his tenure as mayor just days prior to the firing.

During testimony, Owen stated that he did not discriminate in any

way in the firing of Puchino, who he stated had done a lot of great things for the city. However, he wanted to go into a different direction.

Ten of the 12 jurors signed the verdict.

The jury found no discrimination based on Puchino's age. However, it did believe the city erred in the firing due to sex discrimination.

In terms of damages, the jury ruled that Puchino should be awarded \$1 million for mental and emotional distress.

She would also be awarded \$5,490 in health insurance costs and another \$117,537.21 for lost pension benefits since the firing.

Lost wages from the firing until the trial would be another \$144,727.10 to be paid by the city.

And the loss in future wages until the time of her retirement would be an additional \$360,000.

The total damages amounted to \$1,627,754.31.

The decision could be appealed by the city and Owen.

"We are pleased with the verdict," said attorney Callie Walton. "The jury did the right thing."

While it will not return Puchino to her position with the city, Walton hopes that the decision will help restore the credibility of her client in the community.

"She was not treated fairly," said Walton. "She did nothing wrong."

While never knowing what influences a jury, Walton felt that there was strong evidence presented to support Puchino's claim that the

termination was unwarranted.

TESTIMONY FROM THE PLAINTIFF

When she was called in for a meeting with Owen on Jan. 5, 2023, Puchino said she felt it would be a time where the two would talk about the new mayor's plans for her position.

Instead, the quick meeting resulted in a request for her resignation. With that not being agreed upon, Owen terminated her. She said that she was given just a few moments to gather her belongings, paraded through the office of co-workers and driven home.

"I loved my job very much," she told the jury. "I was humiliated."

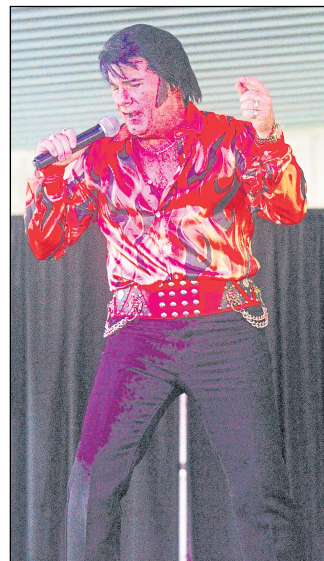
After the termination, she said

she couldn't sleep, cried all the time, wouldn't eat at times and then ate too much, and didn't want to leave her home.

She talked with her physician about the emotional issues but did not want to take any medication at any time.

Prior to the election, Puchino said there was knowledge that her job could be in jeopardy with the new administration. But with no issues with her employment, the many accolades she had earned for the projects she championed and the time and money spent by the city to advance her development, termination was not something she thought would happen.

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Bullitt Blast City Fair kicks off local 250th celebrations

STEPHEN THOMAS
THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE — Some historians claim that the official signing of the Declaration of Independence did not actually take place on July 4, but possibly days earlier.

So it's ok to celebrate the nation's Semiquincentennial a little bit early, with the annual Bullitt Blast City Fair scheduled for Saturday, June 27, at Shepherdsville City Park.

The event will take place beginning at 4 pm with free rides courtesy of Fun Time Productions, as well as over 10 food trucks and alcoholic beverages, according to city community planner Amber Odle. She mentioned that a large dining tent will also be available.

"No outside food, alcohol, or coolers will be allowed," Odle said. "You can bring extra chairs, but no other tents, because they can block the views of other visitors."

A dunk tank will also open at 4 pm, presented by the Cubero Foundation, raising funds to benefit sponsorships for the city's future aquatic center. A few local celebrities may be inside the tank during the dunking. Participants will

pay \$1 for three balls to sink them.

Odle mentioned that vendor booths will focus on various timeline themes from throughout the nation's history, hosted by such organizations as American Legion Post 157, VFW Post 5710, Active Heroes, and the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution.

"We're doing a lot this around the 250th anniversary," she said. "All the vendor booths will focus on that, including a Build-A-Bear Station and face painting."

The Bullitt County History Museum will celebrate independence alongside the city, opening its doors open from 3-6 pm for some related fun.

Museum director Sheri Hatter said a scavenger hunt will take place within the displays, with 10 lucky kids winning a \$10 Walmart gift card. Hatter said the kids will receive a checklist to locate various items on display within the military and Native American displays.

At 5 pm Shepherdsville mayor Jose Cubero will make an appearance, in George Washington costume, to read a portion of the Declaration of Independence.

SEE BULLITT/PAGE A2

BULLITT COUNTY FAIR 2026

It was a great week to attend the Bullitt County Fair.

The weather was as

perfect as possible with plenty of sun and temperatures in the 80s.

On Saturday, the final day

included Elvis, kids hunting through hay for candy and some frogs who weren't in the mood to jump. But

everyone had a great time.

Next week there will be even more photos of the 2026 Bullitt County Fair.

County seeks moratorium on data centers

THOMAS J. BARR
THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE – Having attended a recent forum and having a number of his constituents voice their concern, Fourth District magistrate Brian Bleemel hoped the county could do something about the possibility of data centers locating in the county.

During a recent fiscal court

meeting, Bleemel talked about attending a forum in which state officials gave information on data centers – both the pros and cons.

(See the June 18 issue of The Pioneer News for that story.)

There have been numerous social media reports from the Cedar Grove area where residents are fearful that a data center might be located in that area.

Bullitt Fiscal Court members had previously stated there was no interest in the facilities in the county.

On June 16, the court members went one step further.

Bleemel requested that County Attorney Tammy Baker prepare an ordinance

seeking a one-year moratorium on any data centers while more information can be gathered.

There is also time for the revision of the planning regulations to address the matter, said Bleemel.

The court members voted unanimously to have Baker move forward with the drafting of the ordinance.

While understanding that the cities are not required to follow the county's ordinance, Bleemel said he hoped they would adopt similar moratoriums.

In a related land-use matter, county judge Jerry Summers requested Baker prepare legal documents to require developers secure approval of the site plan prior

to seeking a land disturbance permit. Currently, developers to do work on the property with a land-disturbance permit prior to receiving the site-plan approval.

A truck parking operation on West Hebron Lane has been stopped due to a zoning classification issue. The development sought and received the land-disturbance permit but was stopped as it was allegedly in violation.

Baker said that language could also be included in the zoning regulation revisions.

The next meeting of Bullitt Fiscal Court will be at 9:30 a.m. on July 7 at the courthouse. The public is invited to attend.

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Community Cleanup Days on June 25, July 11

THOMAS J. BARR
THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE – The most anticipated county function of the year will be held this Saturday.

The Community Clean Up Day will be held on June 27 and July 11.

Both days will accept large items from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Solid Waste coordinator Christy Royalty-Orr knows that these two days are the most popular events hosted annually by the county.

The first day on June 27 will be held at the Shepherdsville Youth Football parking lot on Joe B. Hall Avenue, the former Nichols Elementary on Highway 44 West and Lebanon Junction Elementary on South Preston Highway.

The final day will be held on July 11 at North Bullitt High School on East Hebron Lane and Mount Washington

Middle School on Water Street. The event is for Bullitt County residents and IDs will be checked. It is not open for commercial businesses.

There will be some assistance on hand to help you unload your vehicles but be prepared to help, if possible.

While many large items are accepted, there will be a number of things which will NOT be allowed for disposal. The prohibited list will include: yard waste, household garbage, tires, paint, TVs, items with Freon, hazardous materials, any liquids, animal waste, appliances and containers containing food.

The county hosts a hazardous waste disposal day at other times during the year. There will also be a tire disposal day later in 2026.

The event is sponsored by Bullitt County Fiscal Court.

For more information, call 502-921-0134.

