



# MEMORANDUM

OCMFA Agenda  
Item No. MFA. M.1&2  
8/16/2022

## The City of OKLAHOMA CITY

TO: Chairman and Trustees of the Oklahoma City Municipal Facilities Authority

FROM: Kenneth Jordan, Municipal Counselor

1. Resolution authorizing the firm Collins, Zorn, & Wagner, P.C. to represent City employee Thomas Vannort in the case of *Sincere Terry, et al. v. The City of Oklahoma City, et al.*, United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma Case No. CIV-22-522-C;

AND/OR

2. Enter into executive session on advice of the Municipal Counselor to receive confidential communications from its attorney concerning the above pending litigation, as authorized by 25 O.S. (2021) §307(B)(4), because disclosure would seriously impair the ability of the public body to process the claim or conduct a pending investigation, litigation or proceeding in the public interest.

On June 27, 2022, Plaintiffs filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma naming, among other defendants, the City of Oklahoma City and OCPD Sergeant Thomas Vannort as Defendants. Plaintiffs' Complaint arises primarily from a June 23, 2020 encounter between OCPD officers and Plaintiffs related to a street mural and a barricaded street near OCPD headquarters. Plaintiffs allege against Officer Vannort First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment violations as well constitutional violations pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. At this time, the facts available indicate that Sergeant Vannort was acting within the course and scope of his employment and in good faith in the course of employment during all times of the events set forth in the above-styled lawsuit. This employee has requested that the firm of Collins, Zorn and Wagner, P.C. represent and defend him in this lawsuit.

Title 51, Section 162 of the Oklahoma Statutes requires:

- A. The state or any political subdivision, subject to procedural requirements imposed by this section, other applicable statute, ordinance, resolution, or written policy shall:
  1. Provide a defense for any employee ... when liability is sought for any violation of property rights or any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution or laws

of the United States when alleged to have been committed by the employee while acting within the scope of employment;

Title 11, Section 23-101 states:

A. [I]f an action is brought against a municipal employee in any civil action or special proceeding in the courts of this state of the United States by reason of any act done or omitted in good faith in the course of employment, the governing body of the municipality shall direct the municipal attorney or other designated legal counsel to appear and defend the action or proceeding on the behalf of the employee in accordance with the provisions of Section 11-23-102 of this title.

Further, Article 26 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Oklahoma City Police Department and the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 123 states:

All police officers who are sued for violation of constitutional rights while acting in the capacity of a police officer in which they are individually named as Defendants and punitive damages are sought shall have the right to representation by outside counsel. The officer shall be represented by private counsel who is approved by FOP Lodge 123 and the City Council as having expertise in the defense of police officers in civil rights actions. The City agrees to pay the reasonable fees and costs for said services as set forth in the contract between the City and outside counsel and pursuant to 11 O.S § 23-101.

It is the recommendation of this office that outside counsel be retained to represent the employee Thomas Vannort and that this representation be at the expense of the City subject to the requirements of 51 O.S.2021, § 151, *et seq.*, and 11 O.S.2021, § 23-101 *et seq.*, and applicable case law. If additional discussion is necessary, it is the recommendation of the Municipal Counselor that the Mayor and Council enter executive session to discuss the ongoing litigation.