

**THE CITY OF OKLAHOMA CITY  
OFFICE OF  
THE MUNICIPAL COUNSELOR**

Council Agenda  
Item No. XI. AE.1&2  
4/26/2022

TO: Mayor and Council  
FROM: Kenneth Jordan  
Municipal Counselor

Steve Howell  
9201 South Blackwelder Avenue  
Oklahoma City, OK 73139  
Ward 5  
\$493  
Recommended for APPROVAL

This office acknowledges receipt of a claim from the above-referenced claimant in which claimant alleges that on February 2, 2022, he had a sewer backup in his residence. Claimant alleges damages in the amount of \$493, the cost of hiring a private plumber, who determined the backup was on the City main. This amount is supported by documentation.

Section 153(A) of the Governmental Tort Claims Act provides:

A. The state or a political subdivision shall be liable for loss resulting from its torts or the torts of its employees acting within the scope of their employment subject to the limitations and exceptions specified in this act and only where the state or political subdivision, if a private person or entity, would be liable for money damages under the laws of this state. The state or a political subdivision shall not be liable under the provisions of this act for any act or omission of an employee acting outside the scope of his employment.

51 O.S. 2011 §153(A).

According to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, a prima facie case of negligence is established by showing the following: "(1) a duty owed by the defendant to protect the plaintiff from injury, (2) a failure to properly exercise or perform that duty and (3) the plaintiff's injuries are proximately caused by the defendant's failure to exercise his duty of care." *McKellips v. Saint Francis Hospital, Inc.*, 741 P.2d 467, 470 (Okla. 1987) (citations omitted).

Proximate cause has two components - legal causation and cause in fact. *Id.* Cause in fact is determined by the "but for" test: "The defendant's conduct is a cause of the event if the event would not have occurred but for that conduct." *Id.* (citations omitted). "Proximate cause" is also a synonym for "legal cause." *BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY*, 1225 (6th Ed. 1990). To clarify this issue, the Oklahoma Supreme Court has further defined proximate cause: "The proximate cause of an event must be that which in a natural and continuous sequence, unbroken by an independent cause, produces the event and without which the event would not have occurred." *Gaines v. Providence Apartments*, 750 P.2d 125, 126-27 (Okla. 1987) (citations omitted).

This office is in receipt of information from the Line Maintenance Division of the Utilities Department regarding this incident. This information indicates that on February 25, 2022, there was a backup of unknown stoppage at the City main at Claimant's residence. On March 2, 2022,

the City performed preventative maintenance after the backup.

Based on the above information and applicable Oklahoma law, it is the opinion of this office that this claim should be approved in the amount of \$493 and we so recommend.

SRK