

# **Video on Municipal Judge Jerry Evan's computer another big signal that Jerry Rigged justice system is bad for Barker**

1. Back in 2012 Hattiesburg was upended when an internal affairs investigative report was leaked to the media. The report detailed the results of an investigation into possible corruption within Hattiesburg's Municipal Court. The report was leaked to WDAM which first reported the following.

*During the nearly two-month investigation, police found the following violations: Truthfulness, assisting criminals, conduct unbecoming, improper association, withholding information, incompetence, rewards, and debt incurring payments.*

*According to the investigation findings: Several employees of municipal court were receiving rewards for dismissing tickets, fines, and warrants for defendants. The investigation also confirmed there was inappropriate conduct between judges and court clerks.*

*The examination also uncovered that judges were signing blank court documents for court clerks to fill out at their discretion. Plus, judges dispositions were being changed by court clerks in order to allow defendants out of jail or for reduced fine amounts. It*

*was also determined that warrants and other court documents were being destroyed*

Municipal Court Judge George Schmidt was not implicated in any wrongdoing, however, he submitted his letter of resignation to the city. Schmidt said,

*“There has been undue influence and interference with the operation of the court by the Hattiesburg Police Department...intentional, malicious, and slanderous statements made about judges by HPD employees, and perpetuated by other police employees.”*

Schmidt went on to point out,

*“the court clerk and the deputy court clerks are employed by the Hattiesburg Police Department and as such are responsible to the chief of police, not the municipal court judges.”*

*“there are employees with criminal records who are employed and allowed to serve as deputy court clerks.”* He goes on to say, *“This creates an environment in which it is difficult to trust courtroom personnel. As a judge, I have no desire to continue in a position whereby I cannot trust clerks to provide truthful information, nor do I have the desire to continue in a position where operation of the court is hindered by micro management by persons within the executive branch of city government.”*

Hattiesburg’s Municipal Court was subsequently restructured by

the City Council with a majority vote to move away from three, part-time judges to a single, full-time judge court. The new judge would be paid \$104,000, and he or she would have complete control over the court, its management, and hiring of court clerks. These court clerks would all be under the department of the City Clerk.

On October 24th, 2012 local Attorney Jerry Evans was appointed by Mayor Johnny DuPree to become the new Judge over Hattiesburg's Municipal Court. The City Council approved Evans, and then Council President Kim Bradley proclaimed,

***“a new day for change,”***

Bradley went on to say,

***“It's work that can be done properly and be done right with accountability, with transparency, so that the people know that the judicial system in the City of Hattiesburg is fair and is just.”***

Ward 3 Councilman Carter Carroll told the Hattiesburg American

***“We are asking Jerry to create a new entity that is not only going to take the next two or three weeks, but the next six to eight months,”***

Carroll went on to say,

***“We're not asking him just to be judge.”***

Judge Evans even told the Hattiesburg American at the time of his appointment,

***“My job will be to bring the city court system into the 21st century and make it something that citizens can be, not proud of – that’s not the appropriate word – but feel like they can have trust in,”***

Since Evans took over the management of the court’s finances, in particular, the fine accounts have created enormous problems for the city. On February 24th, 2016, Lisa Diaz, represented by local attorney Chris Farris, filed suit against the City for her wrongful arrest and incarceration over traffic fine that was shown as outstanding with the court. She was arrested and taken to jail. The arresting officer, Liquori Tate, was killed in the line of duty in May of 2015.

In Diaz’s lawsuit, Farris alleged that Evans’ Municipal Court engaged in,

***“negligence in the handling and receipt of fine money and docketing the payments properly. Further there never should have been a warrant issued on this charge without verification of the payment. As a result Officer Tate wrongfully arrested the Plaintiff resulting in false imprisonment and negligent infliction of emotional distress.”***

Diaz ticket was indeed paid, but she did not prevail in her suit for damages. This outlet was the only news outlet to report Diaz’s lawsuit. You can read that story by [clicking here](#). Diaz’s lawsuit was the symptom of a much larger problem.

Behind the scenes and hidden from the public by the DuPree administration, outside auditing firm Riggs & Ingram, LLC.

sent an email to the DuPree Administration. The letter, dated September of 2016, stated the firm could not complete the city's audits for 2015 and 2016. The firm pointed to a few issues, but number one on the list pointed the finger at Judge Evans' court, and specifically pointed out the inadequate accounting of the court's fines accounts.

Riggs & Ingram reported that as of May 31st, 2016,

***“certain essential detail and summary reports from the City that are required for audit purposes remain outstanding or incomplete. As a result, significant fieldwork progress for the audit as of 9/30/15 has been delayed.”***

***“The most critical areas for (which) complete data has not been received are Municipal Court fines and expenditures of federal awards. Each of these elements represents a significant area of our audit and will require considerable fieldwork focus.”***



Click to Zoom. The city's attorney and financial officer

were notified by Moody's that the city had lost its credit rating due to the Municipal Court and Federal Programs Department not providing a proper accounting of their finances.

On November 2nd, 2017, Moodys pulled Hattiesburg's credit rating, and on November 3rd, Sharon Waits, DuPree's Chief Financial Officer during this time, failed to notify the Hattiesburg City Council. This information remained under wraps until June 2nd, when councilman Kim Bradley discovered it in a conversation with a local bank employee. Bradley told WDAM on June 2nd, 2017,

"Did not know that our rating had been withdrawn," said Kim Bradley, Ward 1 councilman. "I found out from a lending institution here in town."

Flash back to March 13th, 2017, Municipal Court Clerk, Morgan Owens, was arrested for credit card fraud. Morgan allegedly paid her AT&T bill with a credit card number used to pay a fine. Morgan was arrested, but she has not been indicted by the Forrest County District Attorney's office. A member of law enforcement who was not authorized to speak on the record, told Hattiesburg Patriot News Media that the discovery process, in that case, is ongoing and an indictment is expected.

Hattiesburg Patriot News Media has been conducting its own investigation into the court. A records request was submitted for the browser histories of all computers within the court. put in a public records request The browser history on Judge Evans' chambers computer was almost completely nonexistent.

However, there was one record on Evans' computer which entailed a small browser history for June 22nd. (see photo).

The videos being watched on Evans' computer reveal sophomoric you tube videos, one dealing with a guy getting an erection while receiving personal training services by an attractive female. One has to wonder, given the terrible situation with the courts accounting practices, how would anyone have time to watch boner videos in the Judge's chambers?

An even bigger boner for Evans are the records for the amount of money being billed by the court's pro tem judges. These judges are supposed to serve in the event Judge Evans is sick or out of town. But these numbers have skyrocketed. One year after Evans took over, for the year 2013, Evans spent \$9,000 for his pro tem judges. That is 90 hours at \$100 per hour. For 2017, from January to June, the City spent almost \$18,000, over a 400% increase.

If Judge Evans is spending time watching these types of videos in lieu of solving the problems with his fine accounts, it should be no surprise that Hattiesburg's Municipal Court is in the shape it is in, and this Jerry Rigged Justice system is indeed very bad for Barker's Administration.