

COVERAGE CLOSE TO HOME • Pittsburgh Post-Gazette • WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2021

Whistleblower can't avoid paying taxes on \$34.5M federal award

State Supreme Court rules in split decision

> By Matt Miller pennlive

A Fox Chapel man who received a \$34.5 million award from the federal government for acting as a whistleblower in a massive mortgage fraud case can't avoid paying local taxes on that money, a split state Supreme Court has ruled.

The decision, outlined in an opinion by Justice David Wecht, overturns a Commonwealth Court decision that temporarily voided a \$437,195 earned income tax bill Edward O'Donnell received from his borough and school district.

The Supreme Court's ruling instead backs a 2019 ruling by an Allegheny County judge who ordered Mr. O'Donnell to pay that tax to Fox Chapel and Fox Chapel Area School District.

Mr. O'Donnell, a former executive of Countrywide Mortgage, a subsidiary of Bank of America, filed a whistle blower complaint filed a whistle blower complaint — known as a qui tam action — on behalf of the federal govern-ment in 2014 alleging the bank had violated the federal False Claims Act in its lending prac-tices. Mr. O'Donnell claimed Bank of America had sold the federally supported Fannia Maa federally supported Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac mortgage companies loans that were subpar.

The feds joined Mr. O'Donnell's lawsuit, which resulted in massive fines and settlements against Bank of America, some of which were later overturned. As an initiator of the case, Mr. O'Donnell received a 16% cut of that money, which is at the core of the tax dispute the Supreme Court agreed to resolve.

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Wilkinsburg man arrested after missing juveniles found in apartment

Pandemic forces incoming mayor's ceremony online

Gainey's inauguration will be virtual

By Julian Routh Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The inauguration of Ed Gainey as Pittsburgh's new mayor — expected by many to be a boisterous and grandiose in-person celebration like inaugurations past — will instead be held virtually on Jan. 3 because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, transition officials announced on Tuesday.

The public can view a livestream of the inauguration and swearing-in ceremony beginning at 1 p.m. on Jan. 3 on the city's YouTube channel, Facebook and Twitter, as well as its TV channel.

City and transition leaders made the decision "in accordance with guidance from public health officials," according to a release.

An interfaith prayer event will also be held the day before the

inauguration, Jan. 2 at 3 p.m., livestreamed on Mr. Gainey's Facebook page and Twitter.

Earlier on Inauguration Day at 10 a.m., Pittsburgh City Council members Theresa Kail-Smith, Anthony Coghill, Daniel Lavelle and Erika Strassburger will be sworn in. All four successfully defended their seats in this past November's election.

Mayoral inaugurations are

usually festive affairs. When outgoing Mayor Bill Peduto was sworn in for a second term in 2018, he did it at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum — an event that featured musical performances, remarks by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and a 25-minute speech of his own to outline his vision for four more years.

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WINTERFEST AT THE FRICK





Above. Jennifer Ott. of Aspinwall, and River Young, of Trafford, make their way around the ice rink Tuesday at the first-ever Winterfest at The Frick in Point Breeze. Winterfest events - including horse-drawn carriage rides, walking tours and Winter Lights during the evenings conunue unrough Sunday

Parents charged in Penn Hills sibling shooting

By Jesse Bunch Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The parents of a 13-year-old who shot and killed his 5-yearold sibling in Penn Hills have been charged in relation to the incident.

Thomas Wolfe, 35, and Sara Gerwig, 37, were both charged with endangering the welfare of children on Monday, according to a criminal complaint.

In the complaint, it mentions In the complaint, it mentions Mr. Wolfe and Ms. Gerwig were both home when their 5-year-old son, Connor, was shot in the face by his sibling, who was wielding Mr. Wolfe's semi-auto-matic 9 mm handgun. On Nov. 22, Mr. Wolfe was watching television and Ms

watching television and Ms. Gerwig was making dinner while their four children were in the first-floor master bedroom, according to the complaint.

Around 5:30 p.m., Connor's sibling, Keegan McGivern, used the gun he found left out in the bedroom to shoot him.

In the complaint, Keegan told detectives the handgun was left on top of the gun safe at the foot of the bed, and that his father 'always leaves his handgun out." In an interview with detectives, Mr. Wolfe admitted to leaving the gun out, and loaded with one round in the chamber. Mr. Wolfe said he uses the gun for everyday carry. Ms. Gerwig also told detectives she knew the gun was out, but that Mr. Wolfe had been sick the day before and left it out. Detectives found multiple gun safes in the home, including one that contained trigger locks — they were not being used, however. In the complaint, Ms. Gerwig mentioned that her four children were sleeping in the master bedroom because the second floor, where they usually sleep, did not have electricity. On Dec. 15, Keegan was charged with one count of homicide in his sibling's death and was housed in a juvenile facility. In a statement, District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala called the death "tragic. Keegan was initially charged as an adult, Mr. Zappala said in the statement, but his charges would be transferred to a juvenile court.

By Jesse Bunch Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A Wilkinsburg man was arrested after missing juveniles were found in his home, including one who authorities say was assaulted.

Tyron Scott, 24, was charged on Tuesday for endangering the welfare of children, corruption of minors and recklessly endangering another person, according to a criminal complaint.

On Monday, Wilkinsburg police responded to a request from Pittsburgh police to help locate a missing juvenile said to be held against his will at 908 Center St. in Wilkinsburg.

When police arrived, they said multiple juveniles in the stairwell of the home tried to evade officers, and the missing child was eventually discovered at a nearby Save-A-Lot.

SEE ARREST, PAGE B-2

At left, Jim Wells, of Cecil, and steed Sophie from Mike's Carriage Service provide carriage rides.

Pittsburgh cultural venues say they aren't seeing omicron cancellations

WITH THE SHOW

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

As COVID cases surge around the country disrupting sporting events, Broadway shows and other gatherings, so far Pittsburgh's largest cultural institutions are not reporting significant cancellations.

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has not seen unusual numbers of audience cancellations for its January performances, which begin Jan. 14. Overall, attendance remains slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels.

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust hasn't either, although a nationally touring show, "Hip-Hop Nutcracker," canceled the remainder of its 2021 appearances due to COVID cases. That show was set to appear at the Benedum Center on Thursday.

Pittsburgh Ballet Theater did not respond to a request for comment, and all of these organizations continue to require proof of vaccination and masks to be worn during performances.

In the pop-rock scene, there isn't much action in late December or early January, making it hard to gauge the impact of the coronavirus surge.

Lotus, an electronic jam band based in Philadelphia and Denver, canceled its two shows this week at Mr. Smalls due to a COVID case in its ranks.

The band posted on social media, "Despite our best efforts to pull off this run of shows, we have had a

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