

## 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 — known as a qui tam action — on behalf of the federal government in 2014 alleging the bank had violated the federal False Claims Act in its lending practices. Mr. O'Donnell claimed Bank of America had sold the 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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## Wilksburg man arrested after missing juveniles found in apartment

By Jesse Bunch  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A Wilksburg 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, Wilksburg 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 Wilksburg.

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.

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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



Pam Panchak/Post-Gazette photos



**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 — continue through Sunday.

**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

## ON 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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