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Courts and Justice

Summit County court worker sues judge, deputies for attacking him while entering courthouse from employee entrance

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A court-appointed psychologist sued a Summit County judge and sheriff's deputies in an incident in which the judge is accused of shoving the man, then telling the deputies the man was a security risk.

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By [Adam Ferrise, cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com/author/adam-ferrise/)

AKRON, Ohio — A Summit County judge argued with and shoved a court-appointed psychologist inside the downtown Akron courthouse, leading sheriff's deputies to tackle and use a stun gun on the man for walking through an employee entrance at the courthouse, according to a lawsuit.

Curtis Williams II, a licensed psychologist working for a Summit County Common Pleas program to help those with mental illness, accused Probate Court Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer of lying to investigators that Williams shoved her.

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Williams' attorney, Peter Pattakos, wrote in the lawsuit, filed in federal court in Cleveland last week, that Stormer lied about the interaction and that investigators covered up the incident after surveillance videos of the incident went missing.

Pattakos said if Marsh Stormer had tried to have a short conversation with Williams, the entire ordeal would have been averted.

"It is beyond belief that instead of even trying to have this conversation with Williams, the judge tried to shove him out the door and then just sicced the courthouse police on him to have him beaten, tackled, tased and arrested as she then just breezily walked away from the scene," Pattakos said.

Marsh Stormer, the city of Akron, Summit County, three sheriff's deputies and a clerk of courts employee are all named as defendants in the lawsuit. Cleveland.com and The Plain Dealer reached out Marsh Stormer, county officials and a sheriff's office spokesman. A city spokesperson declined comment.

The lawsuit accuses the entities of excessive force, malicious prosecution and fabrication and falsification of evidence.

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Williams is a licensed psychologist and social worker working for a Summit County Common Pleas initiative called HOPE, which aims at helping those with mental illness steer clear of the criminal justice system.

Williams on Sept. 15, 2020, led a therapy session outside the courthouse. Once it finished, he tried to walk inside the building through a nearby employee entrance to use the restroom. The doors did not clearly mark that it was an employee-only entrance.

Marsh Stormer, who Williams did not know, confronted him at the doorway. Williams told her he was an employee, and he urgently needed to use the restroom. Marsh Stormer shoved him, and he walked by her into the courthouse, the lawsuit said.

Marsh Stormer followed him and shouted to nearby sheriff's deputies that Williams had assaulted her and that he posed a security risk, according to the lawsuit.

She left the building as four deputies rushed Williams and beat, tackled, handcuffed and used stun guns on him, according to the lawsuit.

City prosecutors charged Williams with assaulting the judge, disorderly conduct and trespassing.

Surveillance video from the courthouse should have shown the entire interaction. Video from four of the five cameras in the area, including those that would have shown more of the interaction, ended up getting recorded over, the lawsuit said.

Sheriff's officials later said the deputies used reasonable force against Williams. Prosecutors on Feb. 19, 2021, told Williams that they would dismiss charges if he agreed to sign a waiver saying that he wouldn't sue anyone involved and if he wrote a letter of apology to Marsh Stormer taking blame for the incident.

Pattakos, who took over as Williams' attorney, filed motions to dismiss the charges based on the lack of surveillance videos and because prosecutors violated Williams' speedy-trial rights. Visiting Judge James Kimbler agreed with the speedy-trial issue and tossed the case.

"It is just an egregious abuse of power and an egregious violation of citizens' most basic civil rights, and it shows just how insulated from any real public accountability our public officials have become," Pattakos said.

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