

Erica Johnsrud, McKenzie County Auditor

NEWS RELEASE
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MCKENZIE COUNTY SPENDS UNDER \$10,000.00 IN SHERIFF 'S REMOVAL PROCESS

McKenzie County, ND—McKenzie County Auditor Erica Johnsrud tabulated the financial cost today for the suspension of Sheriff Gary Schwartzenberger as coming in under \$10,000.00 in salaries, transportation costs, and the Village Business Institute's investigation into allegations of harassment and retaliation by an elected official brought forward in June of 2016.

Sheriff Gary Schwartzenberger continued to receive his salary while suspended, which was \$71,067.20 in gross pay. Acting Sheriff Matt Johansen earned \$77,339.09 in gross pay during the eight months he served in that position.

Acting Sheriff Johansen received roughly \$200.00 a month above his estimated pay as Patrol Sergeant for the eight month period he performed the additional duties. Additionally, the County did not fill his vacant Patrol Sergeant position, saving close to \$75,890.00, including overtime, and excluding benefits.

The Village Business Institute was paid \$6,970.39 to conduct their investigation. The investigation was approved at a June 2016 County Commission meeting, when according to HR Manager Amanda Willis, complaints had come forward against an unnamed elected official for "harassment and retaliation". It was later revealed that the complaints were against Sheriff Gary Schwartzenberger.

Travel expenses for State Prosecutor Michael Mahoney totaled \$439.12.

Other salaries paid to employees who were on administrative leave are not attributed to costs in this process as they would have been paid in either case.

Commission Chairman Douglas Nordby stated, "I support a healthy work environment for all employees. When employees have a concern, it's imperative we follow the processes available and recommended by our HR department and legal counsel. It is also important to understand the accurate accounting associated with the subsequent events related to the filing of the removal petition. The true accounting is approximately 1/20th of the cost being locally reported."

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