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## ACADEMY

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"We have sent some portion of our training to Queensland, Australia, Denmark, Germany and England," he said.

In Tennessee, there are 11 basic training academies, many of which are operated by law enforcement departments, Gazzo said. In addition to Walters State, Cleveland State Community College operates an academy.

Although there are other training options, the Walters State program consistently draws students from each region of the state. In the class that graduated in March were students from Blount, Carter, Campbell, Carter, Davidson, Dekalb, Dyer, Giles, Greene, Hamblen, Hawkins, Hickman, Jefferson, Montgomery, Putnam, Roane, Robertson, Rutherford, Sevier, Stewart, Sullivan, Sumner, Washington, White and Williamson counties.

In police training circles, there is a debate about whether training programs should be more academic or focus more on skills and performance duties, Gazzo said.

"What we do here is a hybrid," he said. The first three weeks of the nine-week basic officer education program are filled with mostly academic classes while the last six weeks include more hands-on technical training such as defensive driving, self defense tactics and firearm training.

Depending on the life experiences of the students in a class, the curriculum can be adjusted if they need more time in an area, Gazzo explained. For example, many cadets have served in the military, making them more familiar with some topics that typically require non-veterans more time to master.

One of the program's strengths is the instructors who have previous experience in law enforce-

ment or are currently serving in an East Tennessee department, Gazzo said. The director began his career at the Greene County Sheriff's Department in the 1990s and then served as an officer in the Atlanta Police Department for 10 years prior to joining Walters State.

Students want to know what serving in law enforcement is really like, Gazzo said. "They want to talk to someone who has been there, and those conversations sometimes take place at lunch or in the halls, but they learn a lot in those conversations," he said. "One big advantage to our program is the instructors do have experience they can share.

"You have to be genuine with them. The students want honest, straightforward answers to their questions."

One of the challenges in law enforcement training is preparing students for the often routine nature of the day-to-day work, Gazzo said.

Cadets' perceptions about a career in law enforcement are often based on what they see in the media and entertainment, he said. When some realize reality does not match that perception, some drop out or change careers soon after joining a department.

Law enforcement officers can find themselves handling a routine call and then having to respond quickly to an emergency, Gazzo said, adding that it is difficult sometimes to make what can be an almost instant switch between those situations.

"That is the paradox of law enforcement," he said. "One minute, you may be taking a report about a stolen weed-eater, and then next, responding to a bad traffic accident."

During part of his time in Atlanta, Gazzo worked as a traffic accident investigator, primarily handling fatalities or accidents involving life-threatening inju-

ries. He recalled that when the regular patrol officers were busy, he would be asked to respond to routine calls.

In one instance, Gazzo responded to a neighbor dispute involving a tree branch hanging over a fence. Just coming from investigating a fatal wreck, he said, the dispute did not seem that important in light of the fatality, but it was to the neighbors.

The academy's instructors try to emphasize to students to remember that when they respond to a call, it is of the highest importance to the person who called law enforcement for help, Gazzo said.

"This might be the tenth theft you have written a report about today, but it is the first one for them," he added.

The basic law enforcement officer program includes over 480 hours of instruction. The average day for a student begins at 5:30 a.m. and does not end until around 10:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, Gazzo explained.

The academy typically offers four basic officer education programs during a year. Its 108th class began on April 9 and will graduate June 7.

With those long program hours, students are required to live at the academy from Sunday evening through Friday afternoon. Dormitory rooms for the students are provided at the Greeneville campus. Given their full schedule, students primarily just sleep in those rooms, he said.

The Greeneville and Greene County community support the program and its students, Gazzo said. Sometimes students can't go home during the weekends, particularly those from middle and west Tennessee. Local hotels have given students room discounts, he said, and restaurants have provided the academy's students discounts as well.

In addition, Greeneville High

School allows the academy to use its gym for early morning physical training, Gazzo said. The academy uses the gym at the former Greene Valley Developmental Center for self-defense training and the Greene County firing range for firearms training, he continued.

Sixty beds are provided in the academy's dormitory space, capping the size of each basic officer education class. Classes are generally close to that number, Gazzo said, and most students are new officer recruits sent from police and sheriff's departments for training.

If there are openings left after the department recruits are enrolled, they are offered to individuals not affiliated with any agency who are interested in a law enforcement career, he said.

Students who complete the program earn a technical certificate in basic law enforcement education and are eligible to apply for certification by the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training Commission.

The academy is a starting point for law enforcement recruits, Gazzo said. "We are just the beginning," he said. "It is their foot in the door."

After attending the academy, recruits train with their departments, he said. After earning POST certification, officers have to continue training each year to maintain their certification, Gazzo added. Walters State's Division of Public Safety offers specialized training courses and other programs to help officers meet that certification requirement.

Those finishing training at the academy earn 23 credits that can also be used toward earning an associate's degree. Earning a degree can be an advantage for a student, as many departments are seeking individuals with degrees, he said.

## SALES

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Assembly approved legislation allowing people to purchase wine and liquor on Sundays and holidays except Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter.

Gov. Bill Haslam has indicated he will sign the bill into law. But one local package store owner may not take advantage of the new bill.

"I don't think selling liquor on Sunday is a very good idea," said Tom Hopson, owner of Big Time Beverage in Greeneville. "I don't think you're going to see any change as far as tax revenue for the city. I don't think our sales are going to go up."

Current law prohibits wine and liquor sales on major holidays and between 11 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Monday.

Ron Freeman, chief financial officer for Ingles grocery stores, said the stores comply with regulations regarding the sale of alcohol and plan to begin Sunday sales once the law is effective.

The law would have two effective dates. Liquor stores would be immediately allowed to be open seven days a week but selling wine in grocery stores on Sunday would not begin until Jan. 1.

Grocery stores are already open Sundays, so it would not cost them anything to sell wine, Hopson said. But opening his store an extra day of the week could lead to increased costs. He said grocery stores lobbied hard to get this bill passed.

Hopson said that, ultimately, he is undecided on whether his business will open Sundays.

Representatives from other grocery stores and local package stores declined to comment for this story as of press time Friday.

## LAWSUIT

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capacity, filed a lawsuit in August 2017 against Greene County Mayor David Crum in his official capacity to provide what the civil action claims is essential funding to add an additional full-time position and one part-time employee.

A four-day, non-jury trial concluded Friday afternoon with closing arguments. Chancellor John C. Rambo, of the 1st Judicial District Chancery Court, said he will review statistics, videotape and a wealth of other number-oriented evidence presented during the trial.

A ruling will be issued at an unspecified date.

## ARGUMENTS PRO AND CON

Lawyers representing Armstrong said her office underwent a series of unforeseen misfortunes in recent years, including the sudden April 2016 death of key assistant Russell Wexler and the departure of other experienced employees, creating a situation characterized as a crises that requires immediate action.

Crum's lawyers painted a different picture of the situation, presenting witnesses who found lax timekeeping practices and a lack of planning to effectively address staffing issues.

Crum did not "come close in any reasoned fashion" to proving mismanagement of the Clerk and Master's Office, Armstrong's lead defense lawyer Matthew A. Grossman told Rambo in his summation.

"This has been a very tight ship in the Greene County Clerk and Master's

Office for a long time. It has gone from a very tight ship to a crisis in a very short time," Grossman said.

Armstrong testified about the situation that led her to file the lawsuit in one of the March trial dates.

"The mayor has resorted to publicly disparaging Ms. Armstrong but also the members of her staff (in) keeping accurate time records," Grossman said.

Comparison with clerk and masters offices in other counties does not line up because of the limited physical space allotted to Armstrong's office and other design deficiencies that hinder effective operation of the office, Grossman said.

"The mayor has tried to compare apples to apples and that testimony is totally irrelevant," he said.

Armstrong has been clerk and master for 26 years and "did not bring this suit lightly," only after the crises situation arose, Grossman said.

Suzanne S. Cook, one of the attorneys representing Crum, said in her closing argument that closing the office on Wednesdays was meant "to deter the public for accessing (Armstrong's) services as clerk and master of Greene County."

"We ask you to deny her request," Cook said to Rambo. "We believe she has not met her burden (of proof)."

Cook pointed to a number of what she called "inconsistencies" in office policy that ultimately hinder services to the public.

Armstrong has hesitated to hire additional staff with available funds, Cook said. Use of staff members who currently work in the office is not done efficiently.

"Court time is very limited and customer time is very limited. There is plenty

of time to be in the office to get done the work that needs to be done," Cook said.

The lawsuit filed in August 2017 by Armstrong seeks nearly \$36,000 to fund the salaries of full- and part-time employees of the office, plus benefits. The total with benefits is more than \$61,000, according to an exhibit filed in the suit.

Greene County funds the Clerk and Master's Office.

## 'INEFFICIENCIES' CITED

"There are inefficiencies in the administration of the Clerk and Masters Office," Cook said. "During all of this crises time she has not denied vacation time, sick time and comp time to a single employee" with one exception.

Cook told Rambo if there is a crisis situation in the Clerk and Master's Office, Armstrong "is the one who created it."

Testimony Tuesday was largely by a paralegal working with the Johnson City law firm of Hunter, Smith & Davis that represents Crum. Ellen Pollock closely monitored 220 hours worked by Clerk and Master's Office staff for a six-month period between April and October 2017.

Her testimony Tuesday, supported by detailed charts, documents and courthouse surveillance camera videotape, suggested that Armstrong and staff worked erratic hours and were often late or left early on a number of days identified by Pollock.

Pollock also provided figures that supported the contention of Crum's that there is currently ample staffing to run the office, which is closed on Wednes-

days so staff can keep up on paperwork.

Videotape presented at trial showed some individuals standing at the Clerk and Master's office service window and leaving without contact on several Wednesdays, while others were seen being ushered into the office.

Grossman characterized the figures compiled by Pollock as "raw and meaningless data" taken out of context in many instances.

An expert witness for Armstrong who testified Friday, data technology analyst Tyler Cannon, refuted the videotape evidence after reviewing several hours of footage, finding "multiple anomalies" that that included "frame slipping" and "time span lapses" that Cannon said made the video unreliable as proof of the times worked by officer staff members.

"We would not be able to trust that system as an accurate record," Cannon testified.

## JENKINS TESTIMONY

The state Administrative Office of the Courts assigned the case to Rambo last year after 3rd Judicial District Chancellor Douglas T. Jenkins recused himself.

Jenkins found himself in an unfamiliar location on the witness stand Friday morning when he was called as a rebuttal witness for the petitioners.

Cross-examination resulted in several sharp exchanges between Jenkins and Dessauer, one of the lawyers for Crum.

Jenkins said he authorized Armstrong to close the Clerk and Master's Office on Wednesday, but left it up to her discretion to do so.

Jenkins pointed to

Armstrong's experience in the office and staunchly defended her administrative skills.

"What will happen if the court sees fit to rule in our favor (is) the ink wouldn't be dry on that order before all those 'closed on Wednesday' signs come down," Jenkins said.

Jenkins testified he assists Armstrong with some probate cases because of the caseload her office must handle in Greene County.

"It's for the convenience of the public. It came to me because the (office) was so overburdened with supervising employees and doing everything else, I decided to do (some probate cases) myself," Jenkins said. "We're doing the best we can to serve the people and the lawyers and I hope the court understands that."

Defense attorney Mark Dessauer asked Jenkins when the crisis materialized in the Clerk and Master's Office, if the chancellor interviewed any other candidates who might be better suited to manage it.

Jenkins said that after the death of Wexler and the departure of several other experienced staff members for different reasons, the Clerk and Master's Office was in "ambulance mode."

"The reason I didn't interview anybody is that Kay has been clerk and master since 1992 and I don't know of anybody who could do the job better," he told Dessauer. "She's been getting the job done and I'm not going to hold it against her because she needs help."

Dessauer cited several state statutes governing public service conduct and asked if he thought Armstrong was "neglecting her duties."

"Quite to the contrary, sir," he responded.

On Tuesday afternoon, Jenkins revealed he received text messages from another court official during earlier trial testimony and exchanged opinions about witness testimony with the sender, Hawkins County Clerk and Master Holly Jaynes.

The text exchanges, which were printed out and provided to the court, were nothing but "good-natured banter between us," Jenkins said.

"They said I had to be a witness so I decided I had to disclose it to the court and the court resolved the issue," he said.

Rambo, over the objections of Cook and Dessauer, allowed Jenkins to testify Friday.

Jenkins pointedly told Dessauer that the text exchanges were not inappropriate for a judge.

"Absolutely not. It was submitted to the court in writing and you failed to look at it before (Rambo) ruled," he said.

Dessauer asked about a characterization made by Armstrong during a deposition that she was "just a hired hand" serving at the pleasure of the chancellor. Jenkins is the third chancellor Armstrong has worked with.

"She knows what her duties are. She knows the situation and she's been an awful good clerk and master for more than 20 years," Jenkins said.

"You're here to promote Ms. Kay Armstrong's position?" Dessauer asked.

"I think that is pretty obvious," Jenkins replied.

A court official said Rambo should issue a ruling on the case within several weeks.

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