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ESTATE NOTICES

Notice is hereby given that letters testamentary or of administration have been granted to the following estates. All persons indebted to said estates are required to make payment, and those having claims or demands to present the same without delay to the administrators or executors named.

Third Publication

PHYLLIS M. BRUBAKER, late of

Masontown, Fayette County, PA (3)

Personal Representative:
Donna Jean Parish
c/o Watson Mundorff, LLP
720 Vanderbilt Road
Connellsville, Pa 15425
Attorney: Robert A. Gordon

CECIL E. CASINI, late of Bullskin Township,

Fayette County, PA (3)

Executrix: Jessica B. Casini 109 Royal Lane Connellsville, PA 15425

CHARLOTTE M. GASKILL, late of

Uniontown, Fayette County, PA (3)

Administrator: Jay R. Hagerman
c/o Abernethy & Hagerman, LLC
4499 Mt. Royal Boulevard
Allison Park, PA 15101

Attorney: Jay R. Hagerman

WILLIAM R. HARDY, JR., late of Dunbar

Township, Fayette County, PA (3)

Administratrix: Jennifer L. Maraugha
c/o Molinaro Law Offices
P.O. Box 799
Connellsville, PA 15425
Attorney: Carmine V. Molinaro, Jr.

FRANCIS G. RAUBAUGH, late of Bullskin

Township, Fayette County, PA (3)

Administratrix: Vanessa E. Raubaugh
c/o Molinaro Law Offices
P.O. Box 799
Connellsville, PA 15425
Attorney: Carmine V. Molinaro, Jr.

CARL E. SLEASMAN, late of Saltlick

Township, Fayette County, PA (3)

Personal Representative:

Brent C. Sleasman

311 East McPherson Avenue
Findlay, Ohio 45840

Attorney: Richard A. Husband

Second Publication

MICHAEL KEVIN FARRELL, a/k/a MICHAEL K. FARRELL, late of Bullskin

Township, Fayette County, PA (2)

Executrix: Michele C. Farrell
111 The Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15210
c/o 1227 South Braddock Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15218
Attorney: Kathleen D. Schneider

MICHAEL GENUA, a/k/a MICHAEL S.

GENUA, late of South Union Township, Fayette County, PA (2) Administrator: Paul Genua c/o George & George 92 East Main Street Uniontown, PA 15401 Attorney: G.T. George

JAMES EUGENE GORDON, a/k/a JAMES E. GORDON, late of Uniontown, Fayette

County, PA (2)

Personal Representative: Gayle L. Gordon c/o Dellarose Law Office, PLLC 99 East Main Street, Suite 101 Uniontown, PA 15401 Attorney: Melinda Deal Dellarose

JERRY EUGENE KOLOSKY, late of North

Union Township, Fayette County, PA (2)

Personal Representative: Khris S. Kolosky
c/o Davis and Davis
107 East Main Street
Uniontown, PA 15401
Attorney: Gary J. Frankhouser

First Publication

DORETTA F. BROWN, late of Saltlick

Township, Fayette County, PA (1)

Personal Representative:
Gregory Ray Brown
c/o Watson Mundorff, LLP
720 Vanderbilt Road
Connellsville, PA 15425
Attorney: Timothy J. Witt

ROBERT J. DIBIASE, a/k/a ROBERT JAMES DIBIASE, late of Springfield

Township, Fayette County, PA (1)

Executor: James C. DiBiase
c/o Watson Mundorff, LLP
720 Vanderbilt Road
Connellsville, PA 15425
Attorney: Timothy J. Witt

RONALD GALLO, a/k/a RONALD LEO GALLO, late of Connellsville, Fayette County,

PA (1)

Administratrix: Cindy Lou Gallo 102 Eighty Acres Road Dunbar, PA 15431 c/o Earhart Law Office, PC 4312 Old William Penn Highway Murrysville, PA 15668 Attorney: Thomas Earhart

ADRIENNE SUE ROBINSON, a/k/a ADRIENNE S. ROBINSON, late of Springhill

Township, Fayette County, PA (1)

Executor: William M. Uhler
590 Fallen Timbers Road
Point Marion, PA 15474
c/o 76 East Main Street
Uniontown, PA 15401
Attorney: Douglas S. Sholtis

LEGAL NOTICES

Fictitious Name Registration

Notice is hereby given that an Application for Registration of Fictitious Name was filed in the Department of State of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on April 22, 2021 for Trixi Trucking at 211 Stephens Street Vanderbilt, PA 15486. The name and address of each individual interested in the business is Andrew Greenier at 211 Stephens Street Vanderbilt, PA 15486. This was filed in accordance with 54 PaC.S. 311.417

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, PENNSYVLANIA

ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

IN RE: SOFIA RUTH DAVIS a/k/a SOFIA DAVIS

D.O.B. 10/04/2004

CHILD OF: LAUREN LINT A/K/A
LAUREN NICOLE LINT A/K/A LAUREN
N. LINT A/K/A LAURA R. LINT A/K/A
LAUREN LITN A/K/A LAURA N. LINT and
ANY UNKNOWN FATHER

NO: 63-21-0846

Take notice that a Petition for Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights of Lauren Lint a/k/a Lauren Nicole Lint a/k/a Lauren N. Lint a/k/a Laura R. Lint a/k/a Lauren Litn a/k/a Laura N. Lint and any Unknown Father, mother and father of Sofia Ruth Davis a/k/a Sofia Davis, will be presented to the Orphans' Court of Washington County, Pennsylvania. Any person wishing to assert his/her parental rights should appear in Courtroom No. 7 of the Washington County Courthouse, Washington, Pennsylvania, for a hearing as to the same on September 23, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

You are warned that even if you fail to appear at the scheduled hearing, the hearing will go on without you and your rights to your child may be ended by the Court without your being present.

You have the right to be represented at the hearing by an attorney. You should take this notice to your attorney at once. If you do not have an attorney or cannot afford representation, contact the Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid Society, 10 West Cherry Avenue, Washington, Pennsylvania, 15301, (724) 225-6170, to find out where you can obtain legal help.

Justin Faloshey, Caseworker Washington County Children & Youth Social Service Agency 100 West Beau Street 502 Courthouse Square Washington, PA 15301 Telephone: (724) 228-6884

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, PENNSYVLANIA

ORPHANS' COURT DIVISION

IN RE: DESTINY LEE CHAFANT a/k/a
DESTINY CHALFANT and SAVANNAH
LYNN CHALFANT a/k/a SAVANNAH
CHALFANT

D.O.B. 10/02/2004 and 10/06/2007

CHILD OF: of LAUREN LINT A/K/A LAUREN NICOLE LINT A/K/A LAUREN N. LINT A/K/A LAURA R. LINT A/K/A LAUREN LITN A/K/A LAURA N. LINT

NO: 63-21-0845 and 63-19-1457

Take notice that a Petition for Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights of Lauren Lint a/k/a Lauren Nicole Lint a/k/a Lauren N. Lint a/k/a Laura R. Lint a/k/a Lauren Litn a/k/a Laura N. Lint, mother of Destiny Lee Chalfant a/k/a Destiny Chalfant and Savannah Lynn Chalfant a/k/a Savannah Chalfant, will be presented to the Orphans' Court of Washington County, Pennsylvania. Any person wishing to assert her parental rights should appear in Courtroom No. 7 of the Washington County Courthouse, Washington, Pennsylvania, for a hearing as to the same on September 23, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

You are warned that even if you fail to appear at the scheduled hearing, the hearing will go on without you and your rights to your child may be ended by the Court without your being present.

You have the right to be represented at the hearing by an attorney. You should take this notice to your attorney at once. If you do not have an attorney or cannot afford representation, contact the Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid Society, 10 West Cherry Avenue, Washington, Pennsylvania, 15301, (724) 225-6170, to find out where you can obtain legal help.

Justin Faloshey, Caseworker Washington County Children & Youth Social Service Agency 100 West Beau Street 502 Courthouse Square Washington, PA 15301 Telephone: (724) 228-6884

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JUDICIAL OPINION

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF FAYETTE COUNTY CIVIL DIVISION

In Re: Consolidated Return of Sale of Properties Sold for Delinquent Taxes by the Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau Upset Tax Sale

:

Parcel No. 05-09-0540

.

Thomas Phillips, Intervenor/Appellant. Honorable Linda R. Cordaro

No. 2237 of 2020

OPINION

Cordaro, J.

June 7, 2021

SUMMARY

After a Hearing on March 12, 2021, this Court set aside a 2020 upset tax sale of a Property in Fayette County. Intervenor, who was the highest bidder for the Property at the tax sale, appeals this Court's decision.

FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

Kristopher Hochendoner is the owner of the Property at issue in this matter. The Property is located at 107 Trader Avenue in Connellsville, Pennsylvania and is Tax Parcel ID No. 05-09-0540. The Property was sold at the 2020 Fayette County upset tax sale, which took place on October 19, 2020. The highest bidder on the Property was Intervenor/Appellant, Thomas Phillips.

On December 18, 2020, Mr. Hochendoner filed timely exceptions to the sale. This Court held a Hearing on the exceptions on March 12, 2021. The Fayette County Tax Bureau called Sarah Friend to testify at the Hearing. Ms. Friend is the First Assistant with the Tax Claim Bureau. (Exceptions Proceedings at 4.) The following testimony was adduced through Ms. Friend at the Hearing:

In June of 2020, the Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau sent out a notice of sale that was supposed to reach Mr. Hochendoner by certified mail. The mail was sent to "11638 State Route 981." (Proceedings at 18-19.) However, the mail was returned to the Tax Claim Bureau from the Post Office on June 8 as attempted. (Id. at 6-7.)

Prior to that, the Tax Claim Bureau had also sent a return and claim on February 22, 2019, which would have notified Mr. Hochendoner of taxes that he owed; however this was also returned to the Bureau as attempted. (Id. at 6-8.) Additional attempts to

notify the Property owner of delinquent taxes were made on March 22, 24, and 28 of 2019 and on April 9, 2019. (Id. at 8.) These mailings were all sent to "11638 State Route 981." (Id. at 19.) Each mailing was returned to the sender as attempted. (Id. at 7-8.)

On July 1, 2020, the Tax Claim Bureau posted the Property by using Palmetto Posting. (Id. at 9.) The Bureau presented a color photo of the posting, which was admitted into evidence at the Hearing. (Id.) The posting had an orange notice of sale and a green return and claim. (Id.)

On or about September 24, 2020, the Tax Claim Bureau sent a 10-day letter to Mr. Hochendoner. {1} (Id. at 11.)

After the October 19, 2020 upset tax sale, the Bureau sent another letter to the owner, notifying him that the Property was sold. (Id. at 15-16.) The Bureau attached the Decree Nisi as well. (Id. at 16.) This letter was sent out on November 18, 2020. (Id. at 26-27.)

Also relevant to Ms. Friend's testimony was that the Property at issue was used by the owner as a rental property. (Id. at 17-18.)

Ms. Friend also testified that the Tax Claim Bureau had sent a notice in 2017 that was received by Mr. Hochendoner, with the address of "1638 Route 981 Ruffs Dale, PA." (Id. at 29.) However, the tax notices, the tax sale notice, the original notice of sale and return of claim, the 10-day letter, and the post-sale letter were all sent to "11638" State Route 981. (Id. at 29-31.) When the restricted-delivery mail came back to the Bureau as "attempted," the Bureau used a search engine called True People Search to determine the correct address. (Id.) However, the Bureau never searched any county indices, never searched in the Prothonotary's Office, the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, or the Office of the Clerk of Courts to find any information regarding Mr. Hochendoner, and never searched in telephone directories. (Id. at 31-32, 47-48.)

No other witnesses were called at the Hearing. Based on the evidence and testimony presented at the Hearing, this Court found that the Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau did not meet its burden to establish that Mr. Hochendoner was properly put on notice that his Property would be exposed for sale. As a result, this Court granted Plaintiffs exceptions and set aside the deed for the Property recorded by the Intervenor.

On April 8, 2021, Intervenor filed a timely notice of appeal. This Court directed Intervenor to file a statement of issues complained of on appeal, which Intervenor timely filed on May 13, 2021.

^{1} The testimony of Ms. Friend at the Hearing is not exactly clear regarding which date the Bureau attempted to mail the 10-day letter to Mr. Hochendoner. (See, Proceedings at 11-15.) The letter was taken to the post office on either the 24th or 25th of September, and the letter had the date of September 28, 2020 stamped by the post office. Ms. Friend testified that the Bureau does not save individual copies of these letters, so the letter presented at the Hearing was a copy of an example letter.

ISSUES ON APPEAL

Intervenor raises two issues on appeal:

- 1) [T]he Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau [met] its burden to provide proper notice to the Plaintiff/Appellee and [the Court] should not have set aside the tax sale.
- 2) [Alternatively, the Court] set aside the tax sale before testimony was offered by the Appellee/Plaintiff. Appellant/Intervenor argues that the Plaintiff/ Appellee had actual and/or constructive notice of the sale and that his testimony must have been heard before the Court could set aside the sale.

Appellant's Brief Statement of Issues Raised on Appeal.

DISCUSSION

Appellant's First Issue on Appeal is that the Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau provided proper notice to Mr. Hochendoner before exposing his Property at the 2020 upset tax sale, and that this Court erred in granting Mr. Hochendoner's exceptions.

"[T]he forfeiture of a person's property rights for failure to pay taxes is a momentous event under the Pennsylvania and United States Constitutions." Stanford-Gale v. Tax Claim Bureau of Susquehanna County, 816 A.2d 1214, 1216 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2003), citing Tracy v. Chester County, Tax Claim Bureau, 489 A.2d 1334, 1339 (Pa. 1985). The Real Estate Tax Sale Law was enacted "with the primary purpose of [ensuring] the collection of taxes, and not to strip away citizens' property rights." Stanford-Gale at 1216, citing Tracy at 1339. "[T]he 'strict provisions of the Real Estate Tax Sale Law were never meant to punish taxpayers who omitted through oversight or error... to pay their taxes." Tracy at 1339, citing Ross Appeal, 76 A.2d 749, 753 (1950).

Importantly, "[t]he Tax Sale Law assists in the collection of taxes and is not intended to create investment opportunities for others." Jenkins v. Fayette County Tax Claim Bureau, 176 A.3d 1038, 1043 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2018) (Internal citation omitted).

The Real Estate Tax Sale Law requires that the county tax claim bureau provide notice to property owners prior to a tax sale. 72 P.S. § 5860.602(e)(1). This is not just a technical requirement; notice must be adhered to strictly. Teslovich v. Johnson, 406 A.2d 1374, 1378 (Pa. 1974) ("The notice provisions of the tax sale statute must be strictly complied with in order to guard against the deprivation of property without due process of law.") (Internal citation omitted). Further, "even technical compliance with the statute may not always satisfy the demands of due process since the Real Estate Tax Sale Law states the minimum effort to be done by a tax claim bureau." (Internal citations and brackets omitted). Brodhead Creek Associates, LLC v. County of Monroe, 231 A.3d 69, 75 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2020); see also Geier v. Tax Claim Bureau of Schuylkill County, 588 A.2d 480,483 (Pa. 1991) ("[A] taxing authority's strict compliance with the tax sale law does not necessarily satisfy the demands of due process.").

"When exceptions are filed to a tax sale, the burden of proof is on the tax claim

bureau to prove compliance with the notice requirements of the Real Estate Tax Sale Law." FS Partners v. York County Tax Claim Bureau, 132 A.3d 577, 581 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2016). In determining whether to set aside a tax sale, the trial court has broad discretion regarding the credibility of the witnesses and the findings of fact. See Krumbine v. Lebanon County Tax Claim Bureau, 621 A.2d 1139, 1140 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1993) ("In tax sale cases, [the Commonwealth Court's] scope of review is limited to determining whether the trial court abused its discretion, rendered a decision with lack of supporting evidence, or clearly erred as a matter of law.") (Internal citation omitted); see also Nguyen v. Delaware County Tax Claim Bureau, 244 A.3d 96, 111 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 2020) ("Pennsylvania courts have long recognized the broad discretion of the fact- finding trial court...") (Internal citations and brackets omitted).

Relevant to the issue that was before this Court, Section 5860.607a of the Tax Sale Law states:

When any notification of a pending tax sale or a tax sale subject to court confirmation is required to be mailed to any owner, mortgagee, lienholder or other person or entity whose property interests are likely to be significantly affected by such tax sale, and such mailed notification is either returned without the required receipted personal signature of the addressee or under other circumstances raising a significant doubt as to the actual receipt of such notification by the named addressee or is not returned or acknowledged at all, then, before the tax sale can be conducted or confirmed, the bureau must exercise reasonable efforts to discover the whereabouts of such person or entity and notify [that person]. The bureau's efforts shall include, but not necessarily be restricted to, a search of current telephone directories for the county and of the dockets and indices of the county tax assessment offices, recorder of deeds office and prothonotary's office, as well as contacts made to any apparent alternate address or telephone number which may have been written on or in the file pertinent to such property. When such reasonable efforts have been exhausted, regardless of whether or not the notification efforts have been successful, a notation shall be placed in the property file describing the efforts made and the results thereof, and the property may be rescheduled for sale or the sale may be confirmed as provided in this act.

72 P.S. § 5860.607a(a) (Emphasis added). Further, subsection (b) adds that "[t]he notification efforts required by subsection (a) shall be in addition to any other notice requirements imposed by this act."

Here, based on the testimony presented by the Tax Claim Bureau at the Hearing, the Bureau clearly failed to satisfy Section 5860.607a. First, it is undisputed that notification of the pending tax sale was required to be mailed to Mr. Hochendoner, who is the owner of the Property. Second, the mailed notification was returned without the required receipted personal signature of the addressee-putting the Bureau on notice that Mr. Hochendoner did not receive actual notice of the pending tax sale.

Because notification was not made to Mr. Hochendoner by restricted-delivery mail, the Bureau had a duty under Section 5860.607a to make reasonable efforts to discover Mr. Hochendoner's whereabouts. Further, the language of the Statute is clear regarding the mandatory minimum efforts that must be made: searching telephone directories,

searching the dockets and indices of the county tax assessment offices, searching the office of the recorder of deeds and the prothonotary's office, searching any contacts made to any apparent alternate address or telephone number that may have been written on or in the file pertinent to such property. As evidenced by the testimony of Ms. Friend at the Hearing, the Bureau did none of those things. For this reason, this Court found that the Tax Claim Bureau failed to satisfy the statutory requirements to provide Mr. Hochendoner with proper notice-or alternatively, to make the reasonable efforts outlined in the Statute to discover Mr. Hochendoner's whereabouts-before exposing his Property at the 2020 Fayette County Tax Upset Sale.

Appellant's Second Issue on Appeal is that the Court set aside the tax sale before Mr. Hochendoner offered testimony. However, Mr. Hochendoner's testimony would have been irrelevant because the Tax Claim Bureau failed to comply with the statutory requirement that it give proper notice to Mr. Hochendoner or make reasonable efforts to discover his whereabouts prior to exposing his Property at the upset tax sale. As stated supra, "(t]he notice provisions of the tax sale statute must be strictly complied with in order to guard against the deprivation of property without due process of law." Teslovich v. Johnson, 406 A.2d 1374, 1378 (Pa. 1974) (Internal citation omitted). The notice provisions were not strictly complied with here, and this Court granted Mr. Hochendoner's exceptions to the tax sale of his Property as a result.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this Court respectfully requests that its decision to set aside the tax sale in this matter be affirmed.

By the Court: Linda R. Cordaro, Judge

Attest: Prothonotary

FCBA BENCH BAR CONFERENCE

Save the Date

FCBA Bench Bar Conference will be held on

Wednesday, October 13th from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at

The Historic Summit Inn

Agenda to follow



Thank you to all the Presenters in the 2021 FCBA Lunch & Learn Series for your excellent presentations, your generous time and insight, and your support of our program.

2021 LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

March 17th	Lawyers Your Time to Thrive	Laurie Besden, Esquire, Executive Director Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, and the Honorable Judge Linda R. Cordaro
April 21st	Sheriff's Sales	Anne N. John, Esquire, and Charles O. Zebley, Esquire
May 11th	PACFile for Attorneys	Dave McDonald, Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts
May 19th	Searches & Seizures	Nicholas M. Clark, Esquire, Richard Bower, Fayette County District Attorney, Susan R. Harper, Fayette County Public Defender, and the Honorable Judge Steve P. Leskinen
June 16th	ODC Practice and Procedure and Rule 8.4(g)	Thomas A. Farrell, Chief Disciplinary Counsel, Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and Anne N. John, Esquire

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