State Court of Fulton County

E-FILED

16EV002143

5/5/2016 3:34:23 PM

LeNora Ponzo, Clerk

Civil Division

IN THE STATE COURT OF FULTON COUNTY STATE OF GEORGIA

WILLIAM SMITH,	
Plaintiff,	
v.	Civil Action No.:
FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA,	
Defendant.	
	I.

COMES NOW Plaintiff in the above-styled action and files this Complaint and demand for jury trial, showing the Court the following:

COMPLAINT

PARTIES, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE

1.

Plaintiff William Smith is a resident of Fulton County, Georgia.

2.

Plaintiff intends to bring each and every claim permissible under Georgia law. Plaintiff seeks all medical expenses, pain and suffering, and all compensatory, special consequential, economic, general, and other damages permissible under Georgia law.

3.

Defendant Fulton County, Georgia ("Fulton County") may be served through Chairman John Eaves, Fulton County Board of Commissioners, 141 Pryor Street SW, 10th Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

4.

Fulton County has been properly served with process in this action.

Jurisdiction and venue are proper as to Fulton County.

6.

On October 2, 2014, *ante litem* notice of these claims was sent to Chairman John Eaves of Fulton County Board of Commissioners via certified mail, return receipt requested. The Notice of Claim was delivered and signed for by "Malcolm K. Clenems." The Notice of Claim and delivery receipt are attached collectively as Exhibit "1."

7.

On October 2, 2014, *ante litem* notice of these claims was sent to then Chief of Police Cassandra Jones at Fulton County Police Department via certified mail, return receipt requested. The Notice of Claim was delivered and signed for by "L. Miles." The Notice of Claim and copy of the delivery receipt are attached collectively as Exhibit "2."

8.

Plaintiff has complied with all prerequisites necessary to bring these claims against Fulton County.

FACTS

9.

At all relevant times, Plaintiff was in the custody and control of Fulton County.

10.

On July 29, 2014, Officer Nicholas Williams was transporting Plaintiff in a police car.

11.

Officer Williams, a Fulton County police officer and employee, was responsible for transporting Plaintiff.

Officer Williams handcuffed Plaintiff and placed him into the back seat of the police car.

13.

Officer Williams failed to put a seatbelt on Plaintiff.

14.

During the transport, Officer Williams saw a vehicle reported to be stolen.

15.

Officer Williams attempted to stop the vehicle reported to be stolen and collided with it.

16.

As a result of the collision, Plaintiff hit his head on the divider between the front and back seats.

17.

Plaintiff was transported to Grady Hospital for treatment.

18.

As a direct and proximate result of Fulton County and its employee's negligence and failure to exercise due care, Plaintiff suffered severe injuries.

19.

As a result of his injuries, Plaintiff needed and underwent spine surgery on August 4, 2016.

VICARIOUS LIABILITY

20.

Fulton County is liable for the tortious acts and omissions of Officer Williams under the doctrine of *respondeat superior*.

Fulton County is liable for the tortious acts and omissions of Officer Williams because Fulton County had control over the time, manner, and method of Officer Williams' actions.

22.

Fulton County is liable for the tortious acts and omissions of Officer Williams because Officer Williams was Fulton County's agent.

NEGLIGENCE AND NEGLIGENCE PER SE AGAINST DEFENDANT

23.

Fulton County may be liable for the negligent hiring of Officer Williams.

24.

Fulton County may be liable for the negligent retention of Officer Williams.

25.

Fulton County may be liable for failing to create and/or follow reasonable and proper safety procedures.

26.

Fulton County owed a duty of care to the motoring public in general, and to Plaintiff, its passenger, in particular, to operate a vehicle in a reasonable and prudent manner and to adhere to the pertinent Rules of the Road for the State of Georgia.

27.

Fulton County and its employee breached their duty to exercise reasonable care in a number of ways, including, but not limited to:

a) Failing to exercise due care in operating a vehicle in violation of O.C.G.A. § 40-8-76.1 (failing to use a seatbelt when required);

- b) Operating a vehicle in reckless disregard for the safety of persons or property in violation of O.C.G.A. § 40-6-390 (reckless driving);
- c) Failing to exercise due care in operating a vehicle in violation of O.C.G.A. § 40-60-180 (driving too fast for conditions); and
- d) Failing to keep a proper lookout ahead.

28.

Fulton County and its employee's negligent acts and omissions proximately caused Plaintiff's injuries.

DAMAGES

29.

Fulton County is liable for Plaintiff's injuries and damages sustained, pain and suffering, and all other elements of damages allowed under the laws of the State of Georgia.

30.

As a proximate and foreseeable result of Fulton County and its employee's negligence,

Plaintiff suffered and is entitled to recover for her injuries and pain and suffering sustained, and
all other elements of damages allowed under Georgia law, including but not limited to all
compensatory, general, special, incidental, consequential, and other damages permitted. Plaintiff
seeks all compensatory, special, economic, consequential, general, and all other damages
permissible under Georgia Law, including, but not limited to:

- a) Personal injuries;
- b) Past, present and future pain and suffering;
- c) Disability;
- d) Disfigurement;

- e) Mental anguish;
- f) Loss of capacity for the enjoyment of life;
- g) Economic losses;
- h) Incidental expenses;
- i) Past, present, and future medical expenses, which presently exceed \$133,000.00;
- j) Lost earnings;
- k) Loss of earning capacity;
- 1) Permanent injuries; and
- m) Consequential damages to be proven at trial.

31.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully prays that:

- a) process issue as provided by law,
- b) Plaintiff has trial by jury against Defendant,
- c) judgment be awarded to Plaintiff and against Defendant,
- d) Plaintiff be awarded damages in amounts to be shown at trial, and
- e) Plaintiffs receive such other relief as this Court deems just and appropriate.

TRIAL BY JURY IS HEREBY DEMANDED

This 5th day of May, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Pofi

Michael T. Rafi Georgia Bar No. 127670

RAFI LAW FIRM LLC

1776 Briarcliff Road NE, Suite 102

Atlanta, Georgia 30306 mike@rafilawfirm.com t: 404-800-9933

f: 470-344-3425

EXHIBIT 1



JOSEPH A. FRIED BRIAN D. ROGERS MICHAEL L. GOLDBERG RICHARD P. HAMILTON R. SEAN MCEVOY ERIC J. D. ROGERS

> Of Counsel BRAD W. THOMAS

October 2, 2014

ERIC J.D. ROGERS

DIRECT DIAL: 404-591-1821 DIRECT FAX: 404-574-6247 E-MAIL: eric@frg-law.com

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Chief of Police Cassandra Jones Fulton County Police Department 5440 Fulton Industrial Boulevard Atlanta, Georgia 30336

Chairman John Eaves
Fulton County Board of Commissioners
141 Pryor Street SW
10th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Re: Ante Litem Notice: William Smith

Injury near Wal-Mart, 6149 Old National Highway, Atlanta, GA

Dear Chief Jones and Chairman Eaves:

My law firm represents William Smith. Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 36-33-5, this correspondence constitutes a formal ante litem notice to Fulton County, Georgia ("the County") regarding potential claims arising out of police action taken near the Wal-Mart at 6149 Old National Highway, Atlanta, Georgia on July 29, 2014. The claims against the County may be based upon the actions of the officers involved in the action taken at that time against Mr. Smith and/or the policies and procedures of the Fulton County Police Department. On July 29, 2014, the Fulton County Police Department arrest Mr. William Smith and placed him in restraints in a police vehicle. While transporting Mr. Williams, Officer Nicholas Williams negligently or intentionally collided with another vehicle causing serious injury to Mr. William Smith that required surgery. Officer Nicholas Williams also failed to properly secure Mr. William's Smith safety harness prior to the collision.

As a result of the motor vehicle accident, Mr. William Smith sustained traumatic injuries. These injuries include a cervical spine injury that required surgery, as well as pain and suffering, economic losses, attorney fees, punitive damages, and any other general and special damages,

Ante Litem Notice October 2, 2014 Page 2

EJDR:jjw

both past and future, allowed under Georgia and federal law. Since Mr. Smith is still recuperating we cannot be certain of the total loss is at this time, but we expect that it could exceed \$1,000,000.00.

Should you or your counsel feel that this notice is insufficient in any way, please let us know immediately.

Very truly yours,

FRIED ROGERS GOLDBERG LLC

Eric J.D. Roge



Accident Number 2014012324

Agency NCIC No. 0601300

County

Date Rec. by DOT

Date 07/29/2014

Day Of Week TUESDAY

Time 23:41 Off. Arrived 00:08

Injuries

Fatalities

0

Inside City Of:

Hit And Run?

Suppl. To Original? Private Property?

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Report By: 0980 CLARENCE Badge #

Department TRAFFIC

Report Date

Submitted By

. * * * * * * * * * * * Officer Information Checked By

Date Checked

Oate of Print: 7/30/2014 8:47:51 AM | Version 1.2.8.0 | 4922266

7/30/2014 8:47:11 AM FULTON CO PD TRANS

None Listed

Remarks

Added: Jul 30 2014 5:35AM See incident report 2014-012324

On 07/30/14 I was dispatched to 6149 Old National Hwy on officer involved crash. Upon my arrival I was briefed by Officer D. Green

An owner of a stolen vehicle case #2014-012277 (Brenda Leach) and her fianc (Joseph Brooks) advised that they saw their stolen vehicle traveling south bound on Old National Hwy and called 911. Officer D. Green came up behind the vehicle and followed it into the Walmart parking lot near Murphy USA. When the vehicle came to a stop at the four way stop sign he activated his emergency equipment and attempted to make a traffic stop. The vehicle then turned into the Murphy USA parking lot and drove around the pumps. Officer Green tried to cut the vehicle off and the vehicle attempted to flee through the parking lot. Officer N. Williams, who was taking a prisoner, from Walmart, was driving down the road on Walmart property was T- boned by the stolen vehicle. The driver then exited the vehicle and ran into the wood near 2555 Flat Shoals Rd. Responding officers in the area set up a perimeter and attempted to locate the perp. Deputies from the Fayetteville Sheriff's Department arrived on scene with a K-9 and searched the area. The perpetrator was not located in the area

Officer Williams was transported to Grady with non- life threatening injuries. A cell phone was located in the vehicle and the owner advised that it is not his. The Phone was placed into evidence. Twenty two dollars in cash was located in the vehicle and was also placed into evidence.

Displant 1997

Unit 315 Lt. Rogers had the vehicle confirmed through GCIC and removed.

The vehicle was towed to Major Case for processing.

- A Girano

None Listed

Collision Information. First Harmful Traffic Weather Surface Cond. Light Cond. Manner of Location at Road Road Road Construction / Way Flow Event Collision area of Impact Comp. Def. Character Maintenance Zone Motor Vehicle In Motion Two-Way Trafficway with Dry No Defects Clear Dark-Lighted Off Roadway Straight and Angle Black Top Construction Level no physical separation

6			Vehicle Information.			
VEH#	Number of Occupants	Point of Initial Contact	Damage To Vehicles	Skid Distance Before Impact	After	Width of Road
1	2	Front End	Extensive	0	0	24
2	2	Front End	Extensive	0	0	24

Property Damage

None Listed

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CERTIFIED MAIL

VOID

A **Certified Mail** WITHOUT Physical Return **Receipt Service**

(No Return Receipt Card) Instructions

- 1. Apply this label to the TOP EDGE of the mailpiece.
- 2. Apply address label below to the CENTER of the mailpiece.

PS Form 3800 6/02

ARTICLE NUMBER 9407 1118 9956 1705 0249 88

ARTICLE ADDRESS TO:

Chairman John Eaves **Fulton County Board of Commissioners** 10th Floor 141 Pryor St SW Atlanta GA 30303-3444

FEES

Postage per piece \$0.69 Certified Fee 3.30 Return Receipt Fee 2.70 Total Postage & Fees: \$6.69

> Postmark Here

Delivery Address when used with (A) or Return Address when used with (3)

← Fold and Tear →

Chairman John Eaves

Atlanta GA 30303-3444

10th Floor

141 Pryor St SW

Fulton County Board of Commissioners

Jaci Willis Fried Rogers Goldberg LLC 3560 Lenox Road, N.E. Suite 1250

> Atlanta, Georgia 30326-4275 COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY

A. Signature: (Addressee or Agent)

U.S. Postal Service
Certified Mail Receipt

Sender:

ÇERTIFIED MAIL

stamps .com

B. Received By: (Please Print Clearly)

C. Date of Delivery

D. Addressee's Address (If Different From Address Used by Sender,

Secondary Address / Suite / Apt, / Floor (Please Print Clearly)

Delivery Address

State ZIP + 4 Code CERTIFIED MAIL

9407 1118 9956 1705 0249 88

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Article Addressed To:

Chairman John Eaves

Fulton County Board of Commissioners 10th Floor 141 Pryor St SW Atlanta GA 30303-3444

\$6.690 US POSTAGE FIRST-CLASS FROM 30326 OCT 02 2014 stamps \$6.690 III FIRST-CLASS stamps

Receipt Service (Uses Return Receipt Card)

Certified Mail

WITH Physical Return

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Instructions 1. Apply address label above

- to the back of this card.
- 2. Apply this card to the TOP EDGE of the mailpiece.

Top of the page

Will Smith Jaci Willis Fried Rogers Goldberg LLC 3560 Lenox Road, N.E. Suite 1250 Atlanta, Georgia 30326-4275 COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY A. Signature: (A Addressee by Agent) B. Received By: (Please Print Clearly) KULENENT C. Date of Delivery D. Addressee's Address (if Different From Address Used by Sender. Secondary Address / Suite / Apt. / Floor (Please Print Clearly) Delivery Address State ZIP + 4 Code City



9407 1118 9956 1705 0249 88

RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Article Addressed To:

EXHIBIT 2



JOSEPH A. FRIED BRIAN D. ROGERS MICHAEL L. GOLDBERG RICHARD P. HAMILTON R. SEAN MCEVOY ERIC J. D. ROGERS

> Of Counsel BRAD W. THOMAS

October 2, 2014

ERIC J.D. ROGERS

DIRECT DIAL: 404-591-1821 DIRECT FAX: 404-574-6247 E-MAIL: eric@frg-law.com

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Chief of Police Cassandra Jones Fulton County Police Department 5440 Fulton Industrial Boulevard Atlanta, Georgia 30336

Chairman John Eaves
Fulton County Board of Commissioners
141 Pryor Street SW
10th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Re: Ante Litem Notice: William Smith

Injury near Wal-Mart, 6149 Old National Highway, Atlanta, GA

Dear Chief Jones and Chairman Eaves:

My law firm represents William Smith. Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 36-33-5, this correspondence constitutes a formal ante litem notice to Fulton County, Georgia ("the County") regarding potential claims arising out of police action taken near the Wal-Mart at 6149 Old National Highway, Atlanta, Georgia on July 29, 2014. The claims against the County may be based upon the actions of the officers involved in the action taken at that time against Mr. Smith and/or the policies and procedures of the Fulton County Police Department. On July 29, 2014, the Fulton County Police Department arrest Mr. William Smith and placed him in restraints in a police vehicle. While transporting Mr. Williams, Officer Nicholas Williams negligently or intentionally collided with another vehicle causing serious injury to Mr. William Smith that required surgery. Officer Nicholas Williams also failed to properly secure Mr. William's Smith safety harness prior to the collision.

As a result of the motor vehicle accident, Mr. William Smith sustained traumatic injuries. These injuries include a cervical spine injury that required surgery, as well as pain and suffering, economic losses, attorney fees, punitive damages, and any other general and special damages,

Ante Litem Notice October 2, 2014 Page 2

EJDR:jjw

both past and future, allowed under Georgia and federal law. Since Mr. Smith is still recuperating we cannot be certain of the total loss is at this time, but we expect that it could exceed \$1,000,000.00.

Should you or your counsel feel that this notice is insufficient in any way, please let us know immediately.

Very truly yours,

FRIED ROGERS GOLDBERG LLC

Eric J.D. Roge



Accident Number 2014012324

Agency NCIC No. 0601300

County

Date Rec. by DOT

Date 07/29/2014

Day Of Week TUESDAY

Time 23:41 Off. Arrived 00:08

Injuries

Fatalities

0

Inside City Of:

Hit And Run?

Suppl. To Original? Private Property?

Road	of	Occurence	6149	OLD	NATIONA	L
			LIMA			

At its intersection With

	HV	/ Y																		
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Report By: 0980 CLARENCE Badge #

Department TRAFFIC

Report Date

Submitted By

. * * * * * * * * * * * Officer Information Checked By

Date Checked

Oate of Print: 7/30/2014 8:47:51 AM | Version 1.2.8.0 | 4922266

7/30/2014 8:47:11 AM FULTON CO PD TRANS

None Listed

Remarks

Added: Jul 30 2014 5:35AM See incident report 2014-012324

On 07/30/14 I was dispatched to 6149 Old National Hwy on officer involved crash. Upon my arrival I was briefed by Officer D. Green

An owner of a stolen vehicle case #2014-012277 (Brenda Leach) and her fianc (Joseph Brooks) advised that they saw their stolen vehicle traveling south bound on Old National Hwy and called 911. Officer D. Green came up behind the vehicle and followed it into the Walmart parking lot near Murphy USA. When the vehicle came to a stop at the four way stop sign he activated his emergency equipment and attempted to make a traffic stop. The vehicle then turned into the Murphy USA parking lot and drove around the pumps. Officer Green tried to cut the vehicle off and the vehicle attempted to flee through the parking lot. Officer N. Williams, who was taking a prisoner, from Walmart, was driving down the road on Walmart property was T- boned by the stolen vehicle. The driver then exited the vehicle and ran into the wood near 2555 Flat Shoals Rd. Responding officers in the area set up a perimeter and attempted to locate the perp. Deputies from the Fayetteville Sheriff's Department arrived on scene with a K-9 and searched the area. The perpetrator was not located in the area

Officer Williams was transported to Grady with non- life threatening injuries. A cell phone was located in the vehicle and the owner advised that it is not his. The Phone was placed into evidence. Twenty two dollars in cash was located in the vehicle and was also placed into evidence.

Displant 1997

Unit 315 Lt. Rogers had the vehicle confirmed through GCIC and removed.

The vehicle was towed to Major Case for processing.

- A Giranio

None Listed

Collision Information. First Harmful Traffic Weather Surface Cond. Light Cond. Manner of Location at Road Road Road Construction / Way Flow Event Collision area of Impact Comp. Def. Character Maintenance Zone Motor Vehicle In Motion Two-Way Trafficway with Dry No Defects Clear Dark-Lighted Off Roadway Straight and Angle Black Top Construction Level no physical separation

6			Vehicle Information.			
VEH#	Number of Occupants	Point of Initial Contact	Damage To Vehicles	Skid Distance Before Impact	After	Width of Road
1	2	Front End	Extensive	0	0	24
2	2	Front End	Extensive	0	0	24

Property Damage

None Listed

s Taken Α Ρ Air Bag t Safety for g e е h # 0 Zip Injury **Eject** Extric Last Name First Address City Equip. е treat. s 0 Front Seat-Left 1 NICHOLA 5440 S FULTON IND BLVD 30336 24 ATLANTA Deployed Air Bag WILLIAMS GA М 2 Front Seat-Left Visible Yes Not Ejected Unknown No Side

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