



September 22, 2026 - Regular Meeting

Subject

Three Proposals for Settlement to Manatee County in Manatee County Circuit Court Case Hilaire Michael Vandooren, III, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, Jr., and Virginia Ann Vandooren v. Manatee County, Florida, Case No. 2026-CA-000841

Category

CONSENT AGENDA

Briefings

Briefing Provided Upon Request

Contact and/or Presenter Information

Kristina H. Snyderman, Assistant County Attorney, Ext. 3666

Action Requested

Motion to authorize the County Attorney's Office to take no action regarding: a) Plaintiff, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, III's, Proposal for Settlement in the amount of \$200,000.00; b) Plaintiff, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, Jr.'s Proposal for Settlement in the amount of \$200,000.00; and c) Virginia Ann Vandooren's, Proposal for Settlement in the amount of \$200,000.00, each of which was served on Manatee County on August 27, 2026, and to allow each of the three Proposals for Settlement to expire in the matter of Hilaire Michael Vandooren, III, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, Jr., and Virginia Ann Vandooren, Case No. 2026-CA-000841

Enabling/Regulating Authority

Section 768.79, Florida Statutes; Rule 1.442 of the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure; Manatee County Code of Ordinances Article II½, §2-2-35, and Article VII.

Applicable Advisory Board

N/A

Background Discussion

This is a personal injury case stemming from a motor vehicle accident that occurred on June 18, 2025 (Accident). Manatee County employee Arnulfo Pena was driving a County-owned 2022 GMC utility truck (County Vehicle), traveling west on Buckeye Road approaching Carter Road. Plaintiffs were all in a vehicle (Plaintiff Vehicle) traveling east on Buckeye Road approaching the Carter Road intersection. Mr. Pena allegedly failed to yield when making a left turn, southbound onto Carter Road, entering into the path of Plaintiff Vehicle causing it to collide with the right side of County Vehicle.

Plaintiff, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, III, seeks damages for past and future medical expenses, and pain and suffering for alleged injuries to his lumbar back as a result of the Accident. To date, his past medical expenses total \$18,900.42. Based on discovery received to date, this Plaintiff's medical insurance does not appear to have paid any amount and this Plaintiff's personal injury protection car insurance has paid \$7,498.77, leaving a remaining balance of \$11,401.65.

Plaintiff, Hilaire Michael Vandooren, Jr., seeks damages for past and future medical expenses and pain and suffering, loss of past and future earnings, and activation/aggravation of a previously existing medical condition for alleged injuries to his neck and back, and pain in his left hand as a result of the Accident. To date, his past medical expenses total \$18,900.42. Based on discovery received to date, this Plaintiff's medical insurance doesn't appear to have paid any amount, \$687.31 was written off, and this Plaintiff's personal injury protection car insurance has paid \$4,039.25, leaving a remaining balance of \$14,173.86.

Plaintiff, Virginia Ann Vandooren, seeks damages for past and future medical expenses and pain and suffering, loss of past and future earnings, and activation/aggravation of a previous existing medical condition for alleged injuries, consisting of neck pain and a broken rib. This Plaintiff claims \$130,099.36 in past medical expenses. Based on discovery received to date, records show this Plaintiff's medical insurance paid \$376.42, this Plaintiff's personal injury protection car insurance has paid \$10,000.00, and \$139.05 was written off, leaving a remaining balance of \$119,583.89. The bulk of her medical costs incurred at HCA Florida Palmetto Emergency appear related to questionable medical imaging services.

On August 27, 2026, each Plaintiff separately served the County with a Proposal for Settlement each in the amount of \$200,000.00. Thus, the total amount of all three proposals is \$600,000.00. Pursuant to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, the County has 30 days to accept any of these proposals, or each will expire automatically. In the absence of a legislative claims bill, which requires majority approval in both chambers of the Florida Legislature, the damages, if any, inclusive of attorney's fees and costs, cannot exceed the sovereign immunity single individual limit of \$200,000.00 for any single plaintiff, and the aggregate single incident limit of \$300,000.00 for all three plaintiffs combined, as set forth in Section 768.28, Florida Statutes.

Based on the information and discovery received to date, the County Attorney's Office (CAO) believes that the County has viable legal defenses to Plaintiffs claims. Thus, the amount of each proposal individually appears unreasonable and not commensurate with the value, if any, of each of the claims. Moreover, the sovereign immunity cap limit is \$300,000 for the single incident. Accordingly, the CAO recommends the Board not accept these proposals and allow them to expire. The case will continue through the litigation process to possibly include trial. The CAO conferred with the Director of Development Services who concurs with the recommendation.

Because this case is in active litigation, if Commissioners have questions regarding this item, we respectfully advise that they request private briefings with the CAO and refrain from discussing it publicly.

Attorney Review

Other (Requires explanation in field below) Snyderman
This is a County Attorney item.

Instructions to Board Records

Please email an approved copy of this agenda item to: Kristina H. Snyderman, Assistant County Attorney at kristina.snyderman@mymanatee.org; Donna J. Belcher, Paralegal, at donna.belcher@mymanatee.org.

Distributed 9/25/26, RT

Cost and Funds Source Account Number and Name

N/A

Amount and Frequency of Recurring Costs

N/A