

Justly Prudent Challenges Prince George's County and Officials Over Unlawful Business Closure

Justly Prudent announced the filing of a significant civil rights lawsuit against Prince George's County and members of its Nuisance Abatement Board

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND, UNITED STATE, February 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, [Justly Prudent](#) announced the filing of a significant civil rights lawsuit against Prince George's County and members of its Nuisance Abatement Board (NAB) for engaging in a pattern of unlawfully stripping County residents of their constitutional rights under the false pretense of tackling public nuisances.

According to the complaint, the seven-member NAB unlawfully seized property belonging to Collision Towing and Auto Body, LLC ("Collision Towing"), and its owner, Cornelius Woods ("Woods"), and ordered the immediate closure of the business based upon common code violations involving trash and debris. At the direction of the NAB, code enforcement inspectors with the County's Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) padlocked all entry points to the property and largely refused to allow Woods or his team access to the property. The NAB's closure order has lasted nearly a year despite repeated requests from Woods to lift the order. As a result, Woods lost all his insurance contracts and was forced to lay off nearly a dozen employees, terminate a youth apprenticeship program, and ultimately sell his property just to survive.

Rather than follow proper legal channels established by the Maryland legislature to obtain the extraordinary injunctive relief that compels the closure of a business, the complaint alleges that DPIE's code enforcement inspectors improperly exploit the NAB's faster and less formal process to harass and intimidate residents with frivolous fines and business closure orders. Shockingly,



three of the seven members serving on the NAB are employed by the County agencies that initiate the proceedings before the NAB, and no member is licensed to practice law or has any specialized legal training. Yet, the NAB weighs evidence, makes findings of fact, and issues conclusions of law, culminating in decisions that have led to the prolonged closure of dozens of County-based businesses over the last several years.

“The actions taken against Collision Towing and Mr. Woods highlight a broader issue of due process violations and reckless code enforcement occurring unchecked throughout the County that we are determined to rectify,” said Attorney Jordan Howlette, who represents Woods and Collision Towing in the lawsuit. “As we proceed with this case, our goal is not only to seek justice for my clients, but also ensure that the rights of all Prince Georgians are respected and protected under the law.”

The complaint not only seeks damages for the significant losses incurred by Collision Towing and Woods but also injunctive and declaratory relief, challenging the constitutionality of the NAB’s operations and the actions of DPIE officials involved in the case.

A division of [JD Howlette Law](#), Justly Prudent handles the firm’s civil rights and constitutional tort cases, while also overseeing legislative advocacy matters. The firm represents clients in civil rights matters throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and Florida. For more information, visit www.justlyprudent.com or call (240) 913-5700.

The case is Collision Towing and Auto Body, LLC et al. v. Prince George's County, MD et al. (Case No. 8:24-cv-00603-AAQ), filed in the United States District Court for the District of Maryland.

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