

Thomas may sue DougCo over commissioners' dispute



Douglas County Commissioner Lora Thomas. Photo by [Douglas County](#)

 *By Mike McKibbin / NewsBreak Denver / Feb. 1, 2023*

[DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLO.] — Douglas County Commissioner Lora Thomas may sue the county unless her colleagues agree to repay her legal fees stemming from an ongoing public dispute.

During an approximately 11-minute long work session on Tuesday, Thomas told fellow Republican commissioners Abe Laydon and George Teal that "If you decide to not follow the law and pay my legal bills, I will be forced to find legal remedies to be made whole as the law allows."

Thomas' statement refers to [a series of public disagreements and legal investigations](#) of Thomas authorized by Laydon and Teal last year concerning Thomas' actions. Those investigations did not find any wrongdoing by Thomas.

Adams County case cited

Thomas said her attorney had informed interim County Attorney Chris Pratt of the Wadlow case.

Pratt told the commissioners the case concerned a disagreement between the Adams County Commissioners and the county treasurer over treasurer office employee salaries. A court ordered the county

to pay the treasurer's legal fees after finding the commissioners created a legal dispute with another elected official.

"I'm not sure Wadlow applies in this case," Pratt said. "That was between two separate elected offices, and in a sense, you as a board are an elected office."

Laydon said Thomas was mischaracterizing what Pratt said when she claimed the law allows her to seek repayment of her legal fees.

"If you want to sue the county and cost the taxpayers even more in legal fees, that's entirely up to you," he added.

'Willful and wanton' actions alleged

Earlier in the meeting, Laydon called Thomas' actions "unquestionably willful and wanton."

"It was your behavior that triggered all this; let's be very clear," he said.

Laydon added he had repeatedly said (the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department) "got it wrong" when [their outside investigation into Thomas](#) found no wrongdoing "based on bad advice."

"Leaking something to the press is highly inappropriate," Laydon said Tuesday. "Commissioner Thomas has said she didn't do that, but her lack of candor really speaks to the lack of trustworthiness we've experienced here. So, I'm not interested in asking our taxpayers to spend their money to defend willful and wanton action."

"What you think is right doesn't mean that's what the law says," Thomas said. "I did nothing illegal."

Counter proposal rejected

Thomas also proposed that if Laydon and Teal wrote \$11,500 checks to the county to repay the "frivolous" \$23,000 cost to taxpayers, she would waive her right to seek recovery of her attorney's fees.

"I want to be unequivocal; it was you that cost taxpayers \$22,000; it's your behavior," Laydon responded. "I don't think George or I have any interest in engaging (legal) counsel to deal with the misconduct of a commissioner."

Teal was mostly silent during the meeting, only asking if it was being recorded. Pratt said it was and is [available for viewing by the public](#).