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Arapahoe judge dismisses official who heirs say mishandled estates



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The chief District Court judge in Arapahoe County has dismissed a public administrator who had been accused by four families of mishandling their estates with her business partner.

The order from Judge William Sylvester, dated Thursday, discharged Tamra Palmer “effective immediately” without explaining why. But it came after two previous orders from the judge concerning her business relationship with another lawyer and [a story in The Denver Post detailing that relationship.](#)

The Post reported that Palmer and Jennifer Gormley, who had borrowed \$1.5 million to buy an office building for themselves and other tenants, together charged four estates more than \$400,000 in fees. Members of the four families say they were not informed of the business relationship between Palmer and Gormley.

Palmer could not be reached for comment.

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Public administrators are appointed in probate court cases where no heir is named or willing to distribute the assets of an estate. They also may be called as conservators of estates when people are judged incompetent to handle their own finances.

In 2012, Palmer reported charging with the court’s approval a total of \$319,851 in fees and costs for managing 87 estates.

One of the heirs welcomed Judge Sylvester’s decision Friday.

“That’s rather pleasant news,” said Robert Lewis, one of Eleanor Lewis’ four children. He and his sister, Janet Van Vliet, said much of their mother’s \$2 million estate was depleted in four years for 24-hour care, guardianship services, legal fees and other costs.

Palmer was the conservator of Eleanor Lewis' estate, and Gormley was paid about \$41,000 in legal fees after the guardian hired her. "The only thing that's left is the family ranch we're trying to keep," Lewis said.

In April, Judge Sylvester issued an order that Palmer and Gormley could not be involved in the same estate cases without court approval. Last month, he asked Palmer to advise him of any cases where she and Gormley continued to collect fees. Palmer responded that there were four, but she had been appointed to each before the judge's April order.

Judge Sylvester appointed probate lawyer Marco Chayet to succeed Palmer and instructed her to cooperate with him "to ensure a smooth transition."

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