

[David Adam](https://muddyrivernews.com/noteworthy/former-public-administrator-for-monroe-county-faces-34-counts-for-forgery-stealing-financial-exploitation/20240611182707/), Former public administrator for Monroe County faces 34 counts for forgery, stealing, financial exploitation, *Muddy River News* (June 11, 2024), <https://muddyrivernews.com/noteworthy/former-public-administrator-for-monroe-county-faces-34-counts-for-forgery-stealing-financial-exploitation/20240611182707/>

PARIS, Mo. — A request for a bond reduction was denied Tuesday afternoon during a hearing for a former public administrator for Monroe County facing 34 counts for forgery, stealing and financial exploitation.

Jessica A. Chase, 45, of Paris, Mo., appeared in Monroe County Circuit Court with Hannibal attorney Tyler White before Kristen Burks, an associate court judge from Macon County.

Chase was arrested Monday, June 10, by the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Division of Drug and Crime Control. She has been charged with:

- Three counts of financial exploitation of an elder/disabled person, a Class E felony punishable for up to four years in the Missouri Department of Corrections or one year in jail;
- Two counts of fraudulent use of a credit/debit device, also a Class E felony;
- Three counts of financial exploitation of an elder/disabled person, a Class D felony punishable for up to seven years in the DOC or one year in jail;
- Seven counts of filing false documents, also a Class D felony;
- 12 counts of felony stealing \$750 or more, also a Class D felony;
- Six counts of forgery, also a Class D felony;
- One count of money laundering, a Class B felony punishable for between five and 15 years in the DOC.

Chase's arrest is the result of an investigation conducted by the Troop B Criminal Investigations Unit of the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Division of Drug and Crime Control, and Monroe County Sheriff Joe Colston.

A probable cause statement filed by the Missouri State Highway Patrol said Colston requested on Feb. 15 that the Division of Drug and Crime Control investigate allegations of theft committed by Chase, who was a public administrator for Monroe County from Jan. 3, 2021, until she was dismissed on Feb. 6.

During her tenure as a public administrator, Chase served as the conservator for many elderly and/or disabled people in Monroe County. The probable cause statement said Chase financially exploited and permanently deprived several people of their money by

utilizing the funds from their accounts without their knowledge or permission to buy personal items. She also withdrew cash from several bank accounts for which she was the conservator and kept it for herself. All transactions and cash withdrawals were falsely documented on the victims' financial statements.

Seven unnamed victims were listed as having been affected by Chase's deceitful transactions and cash withdrawals between March 16, 2023, and Dec. 22, 2023. The transactions were:

- Victim 1: \$2,060 cash withdrawal.
- Victim 2: Four purchases totaling \$1,067 and a \$2,500 cash withdrawal.
- Victim 3: One purchase for \$796.84.
- Victim 4: \$1,500 cash withdrawal.
- Victim 5: Deposited check for \$2,141.59 for reimbursement of room/board after death of person (name redacted from document)
- Victim 6: \$6,100 in four cash withdrawals.
- Victim 7: \$3,764 in three cash withdrawals.

The probable cause statement noted Chase has not appeared for several court dates since she was dismissed from her public administrator duties. She also has failed to file final statements and other required documents to conclude her position as the public administrator.

"She still has sensitive and confidential information, including bank documents, for all the persons she was conservator for," the statement read.

Chase is in the Monroe County Jail on a \$150,000 cash-only bond. Nicole Volkert, prosecuting attorney for Monroe County, made her case to Burks as to why Chase's bond should remain unaffected.

"(White) referred to (the case) in his motion as a, quote, garden variety stealing case," Volkert said. "It couldn't be further from the truth. The defendant stole repeatedly. She stole from the most vulnerable people in our society. She stole from individuals who had been designated as wards ... in her role as public administrator.

"At all times during the allegations and counts she is charged with, she was serving as the public administrator for Monroe County. She was being paid with taxpayer dollars to do her job. She was not doing her job. She was stealing from these victims."

Volkert said law enforcement was made aware of the case when one of the victims filed a complaint because a check bounced when she attempted to pay a bill. Volkert said Chase had taken cash for herself out of the woman's account.

"There's been real harm to these victims," she said. "I can't help but believe that these acts that have occurred have hurt people's faith in the court system and their elected officials and in their local government's ability to protect the most vulnerable in our society."

Because of the large number of counts, Volkert said she anticipated a "large sentence potentially" in the case.

White argued the probable cause statement included no information about how the patrol officer reached his conclusions. He said Chase has lived in Paris for 15 years with her husband, and she has five children living at home. She has no criminal convictions on her record, and White said she has never failed to appear for a court date.

"Certainly her history shows she's not a danger to the community," White said. "The allegations, the probable cause statement and the bond ... it just doesn't make sense."

After White spoke, Volkert added that Chase's license was suspended in 2007 and 2013 and she failed to appear in court for either traffic matter.

Volkert concluded by saying the \$150,000 bond was necessary because of the number of charges and the potential amount of time Chase is facing.

"(Her crimes were) concealed for a very long time by her through deceptive means, through forgery and false documents," Volkert said. "She ignored all orders from the associate circuit court during the commission of these offenses in that she ignored the order to be honest and truthful with the court. After she resigned her position, she refused to answer to the circuit court in the proceeding so an accounting can be done to find out how much money is lost. ... There continues to be more discoveries.

"It's been a long process. This represents what's been found so far."

Burke said she would not change the bond.

A preliminary hearing has been set for June 18.