

Blind trust created for AG Paxton's assets

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created for various assets and investments," spokesman Anthony Holm said. He declined to elaborate.

In October, Paxton told *The Dallas Morning News* that he would allow a blind trust to assume control of the companies and properties he had accumulated over the years. Under such an arrangement, a trustee typically handles investments without input from the investor, to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

Last year, *The News* reported that Paxton had become a part of 28 business ventures since he joined the House in 2003. The businesses ranged from a cellphone tower company to an outfit that puts cameras in police cars.

His companies frequently traded in real estate, and state records show he's in business with some of the area's most powerful Republicans, including Collin County District Attorney Greg Willis, a longtime

Paxton friend.

In the Legislature, Paxton, like other members of the House and Senate, voted on measures that could affect his personal holdings. State ethics law requires only that lawmakers avoid measures that specifically affect their businesses. Many vote on measures affecting their broad industries.

As attorney general, Paxton could encounter situations where he would have a conflict because of his businesses and partners.

"Given the scope of his interests in business and politics, it's a smart ethical and political decision," said Rice University political scientist Mark Jones. "That would especially be the case following Paxton's admission that he broke securities law and was



KEN PAXTON

sanctioned by the State Securities Board."

Complications

Last May, Paxton confirmed that he illegally solicited clients for an investment firm without a license to do so. He was fined \$1,000 by the State Securities Board.

Nearly a year later, Willis has asked the Texas Rangers to investigate the attorney general's actions and make a recommendation.

Jones said Paxton's admission of breaking securities law could prove problematic because he's an elected official. But he added that a district attorney probably wouldn't bring charges against people whose cases were similar to Paxton's.

Paxton has not said whether all of his assets were in the trust, which suggests that the process is not complete.

With much of his holdings in real estate and other partnerships, changing to a blind

trust could be complicated. In some cases approval is needed from various business partners, and there are often tax implications.

Steven Boss, a business and estate planning lawyer in Dallas, said the scope of a blind trust depends on the person creating the trust. Politics usually pick a trustee removed from their political circle.

"It can be done fairly quickly, depending on the details," Boss said.

History of deals

When he was a state lawmaker, Paxton cut deals with an array of Collin County developers and elected officials in which he benefited.

In 2004, Paxton, Willis and other associates bought 35 acres of undeveloped land in McKinney for about \$700,000, his campaign aides said. Eighteen months later, their company, Eldorado-Collin, flipped just under

half of the property for just over \$1 million, according to a record of the transaction obtained by *The News*.

The land, sold to a company called Cornerstone, eventually became the site of the Collin County Appraisal District.

Before Cornerstone bought the property, officials from Paxton's company sought and received a critical zoning change from McKinney. That paved the way for the appraisal district building and made property in the area more valuable by signaling new development was on the way.

Paxton said he had no role in efforts to rezone the land and did not know in advance that county officials were considering the property as a site for the appraisal district headquarters. But records show officials from Paxton's company lobbied the McKinney Zoning Commission and the City Council to rezone the area.

Paxton's friend, developer Don Day, was vice chairman

of the zoning commission. He presided over the commission's debate and favorable vote on the zoning change.

Days after the council approved the rezoning request, Paxton's company sold the land to Cornerstone, which then entered into a contract with the appraisal district to build a new headquarters and sold the land to the appraisal district and the city.

A company connected to Paxton, Chicago Title Insurance Co., provided the title insurance for the land sale to Cornerstone and Cornerstone's sale of the property to the Collin County Appraisal District, records show.

Paxton stands to prosper from past deals. For instance, records show Paxton's company, El Dorado-Collin, still owns property near the appraisal district building, a golf course and housing subdivision.

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OBITUARY | PERCY SLEDGE

Sang 'When a Man Loves a Woman'

Percy Sledge, the R&B singer whose ballad of eternal love and fidelity, "When a Man Loves a Woman," topped the charts in 1966, died Tuesday in Baton Rouge, La. He was 74.

His death was confirmed by Artists International Management, which represented him. Sledge had liver cancer, for which he underwent surgery in 2014, said Mark Lyman, his agent and manager.

Sometimes called the King of Slow Soul, Sledge was a sentimental crooner and one of the South's first soul stars, having risen to fame from jobs picking cotton and working as a hospital orderly while performing gigs at clubs and colleges on the weekends.

"I was singing every style of music: the Beatles, Elvis Presley, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Motown, Sam Cooke, the Platters," he once said.

Music critic Dave Marsh has compared Sledge's weighty, smooth wail to "the South itself, in all its bountiful, contradictory mystery."

"When a Man Loves a Woman" was Sledge's first recording for Atlantic Records, done after a patient at the hospital introduced him to record producer Quin Ivy. It reached No. 1 on the pop charts in 1966 and sold more than 1 million copies, becoming the label's first gold record. Raw and love-lorn, the song was a response to a woman who had left him, Sledge said.

"I hummed it all my life, even when I was picking and chopping cotton in the fields," Sledge said of the melody.

An album of the same name was released that year, and three more studio albums for Atlantic followed in the 1960s: "Warm and Tender Soul," "The Percy Sledge Way" and "Take

Time to Know Her."

Although Sledge never again reached the heights of his first hit, "When a Man Loves a Woman" had many lives. It was the first No. 1 hit out of Alabama's Muscle Shoals music scene, and it was used on the soundtracks of movies such as *The Big Chill*, *The Crying Game* and *Platoon*. A Michael Bolton version became a chart-topper.



Atlantic Records executive Jerry Wexler later called the song "a transcendent moment" and "a holy love hymn." Sledge's hit became a standard that sustained his long touring career in the U.S., Europe and South Africa and led to his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2005. It ranks 53rd on *Rolling Stone's* list of the 500 greatest of all time.

Sledge gave songwriting credits for "When a Man Loves a Woman" to two of his early bandmates, bassist Calvin Lewis and organist Andrew Wright. The decision likely cost him a fortune in royalties.

"Worst decision I ever made. But I am not at all bitter," he told *Blues and Soul* magazine, noting that he was only 25 at the time. "It was God's will for me to give it to them. But if I had my time again, I wouldn't do it. Because of my children."

Percy Tyrone Sledge was born Nov. 25, 1940, in Leighton, Ala., a poor farm town, where he developed as a vocalist by singing in the local gospel choir.

Survivors include his wife and 12 children, Lyman said.

The New York Times, The Associated Press

Garland services for Aaron Leetch slated

Services for Aaron Leetch will be at 2 p.m. Saturday at Lavon Drive Baptist Church, 1520 Lavon Drive in Garland.

Leetch, 37, was among seven people killed in an April 7 plane crash near Bloomington, Ill. An assistant athletic director at Illinois State University, Leetch was killed while returning home from the NCAA men's basketball championship game. There were no survivors.

Visitation will be from noon to 2 p.m. at the church, where Leetch was a member and his

parents were officials.

Leetch graduated in 1996 from Garland Christian Academy on the Lavon Drive campus. He was an honor student, quarterback and pitcher at the school.



Services in Normal, Ill., included a visitation at Redbird Arena on Friday and a Saturday funeral at Eastview Christian Church.

Ray Leszczynski



Vernon Bryant/Staff Photographer

Rosa's Cafe in Wylie allows customers to smoke in the patio area. Wylie has fewer restrictions on smoking in public places than many other cities in Collin County.

WYLIE

Council rejects stricter anti-smoking rules

Discussion centers on increased government regulation vs. health

By MEREDITH SHAMBURGER
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A recent push for stricter smoking regulations in Wylie failed — even as officials noted the city lagged others in Collin County on the issue.

A March 24 meeting came down to a philosophical debate about limiting government intrusion, with several city officials and residents arguing against a measure that would have banned smoking at places where food is prepared and served.

Council member Nathan Scott proposed a discussion on the city's smoking ordinance, calling it a public health issue, but the proposition was defeated when several city officials and residents questioned why stricter regulations were needed.

Opponents argued against more government regulations.

"Why legislate for the sake of legislation?" resident Diane Culver said. "Why enact an ordinance just for the sake of expanding government? [Smoking] is already self-regulating here in Wylie."

Scott said he was disappointed by the council's decision not to take up the issue.

"Wylie is way behind [on the issue] as far as the county

and even Collin County is," he said.

Other cities in Collin County have stricter regulations.

Murphy prohibits smoking at most establishments where the general public gathers, including schools, city meeting rooms and restaurants.

Prosper has similar prohibitions but makes exceptions for bars, billiard halls, businesses that sell tobacco and smoking products and some outdoor seating areas. Designated smoking areas must be enclosed and away from areas for the general public.

Smoking is allowed at outdoor businesses in McKinney, unless food or beverages are served. McKinney also allows smoking on certain areas of public sidewalks and parking lots, tobacco stores, designated smoking rooms at private clubs and designated smoking rooms at hotels.

Scott has personal experience with smoking's negative effects: His father recently died from a "brain aneurysm caused by about 40 years of smoking," he told city officials during the March 24 discussion.

"He started early in his 20s, and he died at the age of 65 way too young, and it was from smoking," Scott said.

He said he wanted to prevent others from dealing with secondhand smoke, which has also been shown to be harmful, while spending an

AT A GLANCE Wylie regulations

Wylie prohibits smoking on city grounds, including City Hall and city parks. Smoking is also prohibited on school property. But the city does allow smoking at other public places, such as restaurants and businesses, as long as the individual businesses choose not to ban it.

hour dining out.

"Our community deserves fresh air when they go out to eat," he said.

Restaurants differ from other businesses because they are involved in food preparation and because people don't walk in and out in a matter of minutes, he said.

"When I drink a beer, I don't go around to every table at the restaurant and spew it in their face and make them drink beer," he said. "When someone smokes a cigarette, they are absolutely 100 percent letting me breathe that."

City officials noted that one Wylie restaurant allows indoor smoking: Chili's. Other restaurants in the city have chosen to remain non-smoking.

Mayor pro tem Keith Stephens argued against a new smoking ordinance, calling it an "overreach" of the council's authority.

He also said residents should be able to choose to

patronize establishments that allow smoking if they want. Those who object to smoking could go to other establishments.

"What I'm concerned with is that we would trample on personal responsibility, personal choice and the freedom that we all have grown to enjoy in this country," he said. "If we trample on these rights, which ones are next?"

Jeremy Meier, who owns a business downtown, said he tended to think that smoking should not be allowed where food is prepared but that he also thinks private businesses have rights.

"Telling them what they can and can't do, to a certain line, I feel strongly opposed to," Meier said. "I'm opposed to smoking, but I don't feel I can tell you or the next person they can or can't smoke."

Council member Todd Wintters sided with Scott, saying smoking affects everyone around the smoker. And the city is rapidly growing, he said.

"How many more of these [restaurants that allow smoking] are we going to have?" he said. "We need to set the standard."

Wintters also argued that cities like Plano and Frisco have already taken steps to implement stricter regulations, and it has not negatively impacted businesses there.

"You look at Frisco: It's not hurting their economy," Wintters said.