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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DE WITT COUNTY INVESTIGATOR SECURES THE RETURN OF FUNDS
DIVERTED THROUGH A CYBER-CRIME COMMITTED IN JUNE 2022**

DeWitt County officials are pleased to announce that the county has recovered 100 percent of the loss from the cyber-crime committed against the county in June 2022. The approximate amount of \$305,000 was deposited into an account held in the county's depository bank and confirmed by bank officials on Friday, January 27.

The return of the county funds was made possible by a court order to freeze the bank account(s) controlled by the suspect. The court order was issued by 377th State District Judge Eli Garza after DeWitt County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Bethany Hobbs presented probable cause evidence of the crime and the existence of bank account(s) containing stolen county funds to Judge Garza last week.

The cyber-crime occurred in June 2022 when approved payments to an approved vendor were electronically transferred to an unverified bank account in a branch of the Bank of America located in the state of Maryland. An investigation was launched on July 5 immediately following the discovery of the unverified transfer by County Auditor Carrie Rea. The investigation was conducted by DeWitt County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Bethany Hobbs. A Nigerian citizen residing in Maryland was identified as the owner of the unverified bank account and deemed to be the prime suspect in the crime from bank records obtained through a subpoena issued by the district attorney's office on July 6, 2022.

Lieutenant Hobbs requested a second subpoena to obtain additional bank records of the Nigerian suspect from the district attorney's office on August 15. Her request was finally granted on January 5, 2023. The additional financial records received included a transaction history of several hundred million dollars moving into, and out of, accounts in other financial institutions controlled by the suspect during the month of June 2022. Copies of the recently obtained banking records were forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Hobbs was promoted to lieutenant by DeWitt County Sheriff Carl Bowen in July 2022, and according to Sheriff Bowen, "she took this crime by the horns and has removed any doubt that her promotion to lieutenant was a good decision."

County Judge Daryl Fowler echoed Sheriff Bowen's praise of Lieutenant Hobbs unrelenting effort to solve this crime and make the county treasury whole again. According to Judge Fowler, "Friday was a good day for DeWitt County. County officials at the heart of this incident are proud of Lieutenant Hobbs success in retrieving the stolen funds... and even more pleased that this incident is now behind us."

The county filed a claim with its insurance carrier following the cyber-crime loss in 2022 and received a benefit payment to partially offset the loss. The insurance company will be reimbursed in February.

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