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Pawnee Co Woman Ordered to Repay County for Legal Fees

(KTNC)--A Pawnee City woman convicted in a collision that killed an Amish teen and seriously injured another in a 2013 crash east of Pawnee City must reimburse Pawnee County for her legal fees.

The Lincoln Journal-Star reports that Gage County District Judge Paul Korslund ruled 57-year-old Vivian Cockrell must repay the county for her legal fees, totaling nearly \$11,000.

The ruling came after Pawnee County Attorney Jennifer Stehlik-Ladman asked Korslund to reconsider a previous ruling that Cockrell was indigent and couldn't afford to pay for an attorney.

Ladman said Cockrell transferred her house in Pawnee City and half-interest in 320 acres of farmland in Nemaha County Kansas to her son shortly before charges were filed. Ladman said Cockrell didn't mention the assets in her request for a public defender.

Korslund's ruling said the value of the assets was more than the amount of her court-appointed attorney fees. He ordered Pawnee County to pay the attorney fees amounting to \$10,655, and Cockrell must then reimburse the county.

Cockrell's attorney, Benjamin Beeth of Tecumseh, said Cockrell transferred the assets for estate planning purposes and didn't have the money to hire an attorney.

Cockrell was sentenced in September to 60 days in jail, three years probation and 40 hours of community service for her role in the July 2013 crash that killed Ruben Yoder and injured his sister Fannie. Cockrell must also spend a week in jail on the next three anniversaries of the accident and never again drive or try to get a driver's license.

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