

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ROME DIVISION**

**EARL PARRIS, JR., Individually,
and on Behalf of a Class of Persons
Similarly Situated,**

Plaintiff,

**City of SUMMERVILLE,
GEORGIA,**

Intervenor-Plaintiff,

v.

3M COMPANY, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No.: 4:21-cv-00040-TWT

**PLAINTIFF’S MOTION FOR AN AWARD OF ATTORNEYS’ FEES, CLASS
NOTICE FEES, AND LITIGATION EXPENSES FOR THE CLASS
SETTLEMENT WITH MOUNT VERNON MILLS, INC.,
AND THE TOWN OF TRION, GEORGIA**

Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(h), Plaintiff Earl Parris, Jr., on behalf of the Class, seeks an award of reasonable attorneys’ fees and expenses incurred by Class Counsel in connection with representation of the Class Members in the partial settlement of this matter with Mount Vernon Mills, Inc. (“Mount Vernon”) and the Town of Trion, Georgia (“Trion”). In the Settlement Agreement entered on February 18, 2025, Mount Vernon and Trion agreed not to oppose a fee and expense award of up to \$125,000. *See* Doc. 802-2 ¶ 14. Plaintiff is requesting the Court to award

\$125,000, which includes \$20,000 in Class Settlement Notice expenses for the Settlement Administrator, \$3,791.70 in litigation expenses, and \$101,208.30 in attorneys' fees. The attorneys' fees are 20% of the common fund of \$500,000 created by the Settlement, which is less than the 25% considered presumptively reasonable under Eleventh Circuit precedent and decisions of this Court.

In this Class Settlement with Mount Vernon and Trion, Class Members will benefit significantly from the addition to the Temporary Drinking Water Fund, which will provide temporary drinking water free of toxic per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances ("PFAS") to members of the Class of Summerville drinking water customers who request it. Deducting the requested attorney fee and expense award, the Temporary Drinking Water Fund will have \$375,000 available to provide temporary drinking water to Class Members. In addition to the \$750,000 from the previously approved Pulcra Settlement and the other class settlement with Huntsman International, LLC, for which the parties are also seeking final approval, this Fund will go a long way toward providing temporary drinking water to Class Members until Summerville is able to construct a permanent drinking water treatment facility to remove PFAS.

In a common fund settlement, attorneys' fees "shall be based upon a reasonable percentage of the fund established for the benefit of the class." *In re Blue Cross Blue Shield Antitrust Litigation MDL 2406*, 85 F.4th 1070, 1100 (11th Cir.

2023), *quoting Camden I Condominium Ass’n, Inc. v. Dunkle*, 946 F.2d 768, 774–75 (11th Cir. 1991). The Eleventh Circuit has held that a fee award of between 20 and 25 percent is “presumptively reasonable.” *See Faught v. Am. Home Shield Corp.*, 668 F.3d 1233, 1242 (11th Cir. 2011). If the fee exceeds 25 percent, the district court must assess the reasonableness of the percentage using the 12 *Johnson* factors. *Id.* *See Johnson v. Ga. Highway Express, Inc.*, 488 F.2d 714, 717–19 (5th Cir. 1974), *abrogated on other grounds by Blanchard v. Bergeron*, 489 U.S. 87 (1989). In approving a fee that was 13% of the common fund in a class settlement, this Court recently observed that the average percentage in this Circuit is “now at or above 30%,” as ‘courts within this Circuit have routinely awarded attorneys’ fees of 33 percent or more of the gross settlement fund.’” *Callen v. Daimler AG*, No. 1:19-CV-01411-TWT, 20222022 WL 22867379, at *4 (N.D. Ga., Nov. 7, 2022).

The 20% fee request by Plaintiff and Class Counsel in this case is presumptively reasonable. The fee request by Plaintiff in this case is also reasonable under the *Johnson* factors, although an analysis of these factors is not required. The relevant factors are discussed below.

(1) *The time and labor required*: Class Counsel, who filed this case, have actively participated in all phases of this four-year-long litigation. They responded to the numerous motions to dismiss, which were nearly all denied by the Court. They took dozens of fact witness depositions, coordinated and participated in

environmental sampling, and reviewed thousands of pages of highly-technical documents produced by Defendants. Counsel oversaw the reports of nine expert witnesses and deposed several of Defendants' 21 experts. Class Counsel also defended Class Representative Parris' deposition, filed a Motion for Class Certification on behalf of the Class, negotiated and filed motions for preliminary approval of three Class settlements. Class Counsel and members of their firms have spent over 4,500 hours litigating this case. See Declaration of Gary A. Davis, attached as Exhibit 1.

(2) *The novelty and difficulty of the questions involved:* The novelty and difficulty of the questions involved are evidenced by the Court's 89-page decision on the motions to dismiss filed by Defendants. *See* Doc. 136. They are also evidenced by the number of expert witnesses on both sides who are expressing contrary opinions on highly scientific issues of PFAS decomposition, fate and transport of PFAS in the environment, the basis for EPA's drinking water Maximum Contaminant Limits, and the toxicity and persistence of PFAS.

(3) *The skill requisite to perform the legal service properly:* The highly technical nature of the case and the cutting-edge legal issues involved under both environmental statutes and state tort law have required a high level of skill on the part of Class Counsel.

(1) *The preclusion of other employment by the attorney due to acceptance of the case:* Class Counsel's law firms are small, and the overwhelming demands of this case have caused them to forgo several other employment opportunities during the past four years.

(2) *The customary fee and whether the fee is fixed or contingent:* This case is being litigated on a contingent basis, and the fee requested is far less than the customary percentage in contingent cases.

(3) *The amount involved and the results obtained:* The results obtained for the Class in this partial settlement are significant. Providing temporary drinking water for class members reduces their health risk from exposure to PFAS in Summerville's drinking water and reduces their costs for obtaining substitute drinking water at their own expense.

(4) *The experience, reputation, and ability of the attorneys:* The experience of Class Counsel in other PFAS cases and in the prosecution and settlement of class actions has been a significant factor in obtaining the Settlement in this case. *See* Exhibit 1.

(5) *The "undesirability" of the case:* A case is "undesirable" when there is a risk of substantial loss and where there is a substantial commitment of time and resources required for a complex class action. Class Counsel has faced a high degree

of risk of no recovery, despite the time and expenses required to prosecute the case over four years.

(6) *The nature and the length of the professional relationship with the client:* Class Counsel have represented the Class Representative Earl Parris, Jr., for over four years, and during that time have formed a close relationship with him through numerous meetings and other communications. The Temporary Drinking Water Fund has been a priority shared with Parris given the length of time this litigation has taken and the continued contamination of Summerville residents' drinking water with PFAS.

(7) *Awards in similar cases:* There are not many examples of partial class settlements for temporary drinking water in similar cases. In other cases involving PFAS contamination, a government agency has ordered the defendants to provide temporary drinking to the drinking water customers. *See e.g.* Chemours Consent Order with North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. <https://www.deq.nc.gov/genx/2019-02-25-consent-order-file-stamped-and-fully-executed-b/download>; Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, Corporation Consent Order with Vermont Agency for Natural Resources. <https://anrweb.vt.gov/PubDocs/DEC/PFOA/Final-Agreement-2019/3-20190408-State-v-SGPP-Consent-Order.pdf>.

In addition to the presumptive reasonableness of a less than 25% fee, Plaintiff has satisfied the *Johnson* factors for approval of the requested attorney fees and expenses. Defendants Mount Vernon and Trion do not object to the requested fees and expenses. Therefore, Plaintiff requests the Court to award Class Counsel \$20,000 in Class Settlement Notice expenses for the Settlement Administrator, \$3,791.70 in litigation expenses, and \$101,208.30 in fees.

Respectfully submitted.

/s/ Gary A. Davis

Gary A. Davis

(Pro Hac Vice)

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SETTLEMENT CLASS

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Northern District of Georgia Civil Local Rule 7.1(D), the undersigned counsel certifies that the foregoing filing is prepared in Times New Roman point font, as mandated in Local Rule 5.1(C).

/s/ Gary A. Davis

Gary A. Davis

Attorney for Plaintiff

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing document was electronically filed with the Clerk of Court using the CM/ECF system, which automatically serves notification of such filing to all counsel of record.

This 22nd day of May 2025.

/s/ Gary A. Davis

Gary A. Davis

Attorney for Plaintiff