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2-1-2010

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY vs. One 1993 Jeep Cherokee VIN No.: 1J4GZ78S0PC107278, Seized From: Warren Parsons, Date of Seizure: January 9, 2009 Seized by: Pigeon Forge P. D., Claimant: Warren Parsons

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BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER OF THE
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY)	
)	
v.)	DOCKET NO. 19.01-106437J
)	DOS Case No. J0384
One 1993 Jeep Cherokee)	
VIN No.: 1J4GZ78S0PC107278)	
Seized From: Warren Parsons)	
Date of Seizure: January 9, 2009)	
Seized by: Pigeon Forge P. D.)	
Claimant: Warren Parsons)	

INITIAL ORDER OF DEFAULT AND DISMISSAL

This matter was heard on February 1, 2010, before John Hicks, Administrative Judge, assigned by the Secretary of State, Administrative Procedures Division, and sitting for the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Safety in Memphis, Tennessee. Nina Harris, Staff Attorney for the Department of Safety, represented the State. Claimant Warren Parsons was not present nor represented by counsel.

The subject of this hearing was the proposed forfeiture of the subject vehicle based on allegations that its possession and/or receipt by the Claimant was in violation of the TCA §§55-50-504 & 40-33-201 et seq. Upon the Claimant's failure to appear at the show-cause hearing, counsel for the State made an oral motion for an order finding the Claimant to be in default, pursuant to TCA § 4-5-309. Upon full consideration of the evidence received at the hearing and the entire record in this case, the State's motion was granted. The Claimant was found to be in default, and its claim to the subject property was stricken, as supported by the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Claimant's vehicle was seized pursuant to the law, resulting in the issuance of a Property Forfeiture Warrant. The Claimant filed a claim seeking the return of the vehicle, and requesting that a hearing be scheduled to consider their claims.

2. The parties negotiated an agreement to award custody of the vehicle to the Claimant upon its compliance with certain conditions. The Claimant failed to comply with the terms of that agreement. In the event of such a failure, the agreement provides for forfeiture of the vehicle to the seizing agency.

3. A show-cause hearing was scheduled on February 1, 2010, for the Claimant to demonstrate why the forfeiture provision of the agreement should not be put into effect. The Claimant was notified of the hearing time and location by certified mail. See Hearing Exhibit #1.

4. The Claimant did not appear at the show-cause hearing, and was not otherwise represented. Based on the Claimant's failure to appear, the State made an oral motion for the entry of an Order of Default.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND ANALYSIS

1. Tennessee Code Annotated §4-5-309(a) provides that "if a party fails to attend or participate in a pre-hearing conference, hearing or other stage of a contested case, the administrative judge. . . may hold the party in default. . ." An order holding an absent party in default is authorized by Rule 1340-2-2-.17(1)(a), TENN. COMP. R & REGS., Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings.

2. Department of Safety Regulations governing asset forfeiture hearings also provide:

- (d) No default shall be entered against a claimant for failure to attend [the hearing] except upon proof by the filing of the return receipt card, that the legal division has given notice of the hearing per Rule 1340-2-2-.11(3).
- (e) Upon default by a party, an administrative judge may enter either an initial default order or an order for an uncontested proceeding. . .

Rule 1340-2-2-.17(1) TENN. COMP. R. & REGS., Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings.

And, that

Upon a default by a Claimant, a **Claimant's claim shall be stricken by initial default order**, or, if the agency requests, the agency may proceed uncontested.

See, Rule 1340-2-2-17(2)(b), TENN. COMP. R. & REGS., Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings. (Bold emphasis added.)

3. In accordance with the law, as set forth above, it is determined that the State's motion is well-taken. Upon filing a claim for property, the Claimant was notified of the hearing, as shown by Hearing Exhibit #1, and failed to appear at the hearing. Pursuant to the cited authority, the Claimant is hereby found to be in default for failing to appear at the hearing scheduled to consider its claim, as authorized by the cited legal authority.

Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the Claimant's claim is stricken from the record, and dismissed. The subject property is Ordered forfeited to the Seizing Agency for disposition as provided by law.

This Initial Order entered and effective this 16th day of April, 2010.

John Hicks
Administrative Law Judge

Filed in the Administrative Procedures Division, Office of the Secretary of State, this
16th day of April, 2010.

Thomas G. Stovall, Director
Administrative Procedures Division