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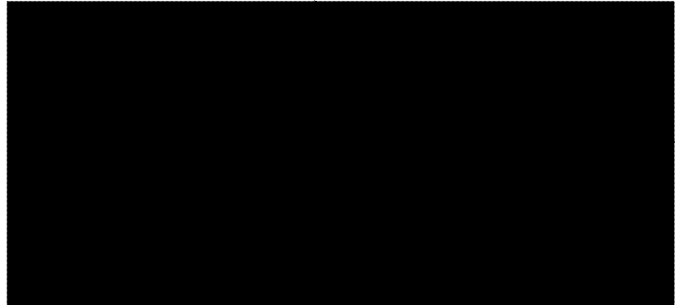
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

AFFIDAVIT FOR ARREST WARRANT

Before me, LEANDRA G. JOHNSON, a Judge of the Circuit Court of the Third Judicial Circuit in and for Columbia County, Florida, personally appeared Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Inspector Brett Lycett (Affiant) who, first being duly sworn by me, deposes as follows and requests that an arrest warrant be issued for:

Katrina M. Vercher

Race/Sex: White/Female  
Height: 5'8"  
DOB: [REDACTED]  
FL DL: [REDACTED]  
SSN: [REDACTED]  
Address: 7215 N US HWY 441  
Lake City, FL 32055



**Charges: (1) Count: Scheme to Defraud – F.S.S. §817.034(4)(a)(2)**  
**(3) Counts: Official Misconduct – F.S.S. §838.022(1)(a)**

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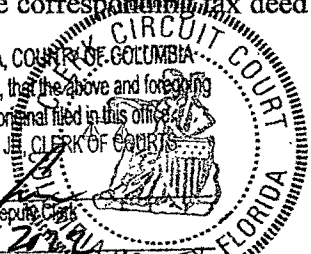
The facts establishing probable cause for the issuance of a warrant are as follows:

Your Affiant states that in June 2021, FDLE initiated an investigation, at the request of the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, into the activities of Katrina Vercher regarding her scheme to defraud the Columbia County Clerk of Courts of funds in excess of \$20,000.00 between November 2014 and May 2021.

Vercher was employed by the Columbia County Clerk or Courts for approximately 21 years and her most recent position was as the "Records Supervisor." One of Vercher's roles in this position was facilitating the process of the sale of outstanding tax deeds. This involved collecting funds from winning bidders when the tax deeds were auctioned. Winning bidders were required to pay an initial fee after the auction (usually cash) and then had 24hrs to pay the remaining balance. Your Affiant determined during the course of the investigation that Vercher collected the funds, completed the required documentation and entered the necessary information into the county's electronic record keeping system (CLERICUS).

After multiple tax deed sale discrepancies were discovered by the Columbia County Clerk of the Courts, Finance Director in June 2021, the Columbia County Clerk of Courts requested the Pinellas County Clerk of Courts (Division of Inspector General) complete an audit of past tax deed sales in Columbia County. Based upon this audit, your Affiant identified 56 tax deed sales where it appeared Vercher altered information. After a separate and independent review by FDLE, 46 tax deed transactions were identified where Vercher either altered tax deed records by recording a reduced sale price in CLERICUS or by reducing the fees associated with the tax deed sale. In almost every occurrence, the discrepancy correlated with the amount of cash that was initially provided by the winning bidder of the corresponding tax deed sale as a deposit.

STATE OF FLORIDA, COUNTY OF COLUMBIA  
I HEREBY CERTIFY, that the above and foregoing  
is a true copy of the original filed in this office.  
JAMES M SWISHER, CLERK OF COURTS  
By [Signature]  
Date 7-14-2022



The following are two examples of the investigative findings:

- Tax deed 18-067 sold on 01/08/2019 in the amount of \$20,000.00. Per county records, the purchaser provided a \$1,000.00 cash deposit. Vercher created and signed a handwritten receipt for the same amount; however, \$0.00 was recorded by the Clerk cashier in CLERICUS. Per the Clerk cashier, a total of \$19,307.50 (including fees) was received for the purchase of the property; however, the total to be collected should have been \$20,307.50. Vercher entered into CLERICUS \$19,000.00 as "tax deed holding account," for a total of \$1,000.00 difference from the official price recorded on the county tax deed.
- Tax deed 20-015 sold 01/11/2021 in the amount of \$40,000.00. Per county records, the purchaser provided a \$5,000.00 cash deposit; however, no cash was recorded by the Clerk cashier in CLERICUS. Per the Clerk cashier, a total of \$40,180.00 (including fees) was received for the purchase of the property; however, the total to be collected should have been \$40,607.50. Vercher entered into CLERICUS \$40,000.00 as "tax deed holding account", for a total of a \$0.00 difference from the official price recorded on the county tax deed; however, Vercher reduced the fees from \$607.50 to \$180.00, resulting in a \$427.50 difference.

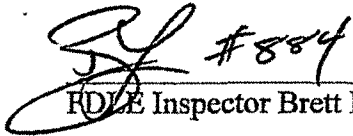
Additionally, a review of Vercher's personal bank account revealed numerous cash deposits that occurred either on the same day or the day after a tax deed sold that was identified to have a discrepancy. Based upon FDLE's investigation, Vercher's actions lead to the loss of approximately \$27,600.00 for the Columbia County Clerk of the Courts.

Furthermore, your Affiant found that Vercher appeared to physically alter tax deed documents on at least three separate occasions after FDLE received original forms from the purchaser of a deed. In each instance, there appears to be a photocopy overlay of the second paragraph of the deed which contains the sales price. Each altered price was less the amount of the reported cash deposit. For example:

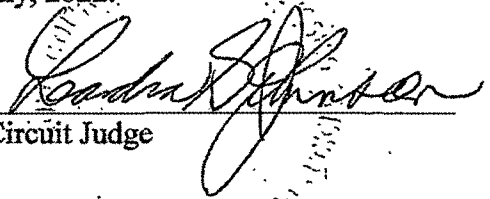
- Tax deed 19-043 sold on 09/24/2019 in the amount of \$19,000.00. Per county records, no deposit was provided. Vercher created and signed a handwritten receipt for \$1,000.00; however, \$0.00 was recorded by the Clerk cashier in CLERICUS. Per the Clerk cashier, a total of \$19,307.50 (including fees) was received for the purchase of the property; however, the total to be collected should have been \$19,292.50. Vercher entered into CLERICUS \$19,000.00 as "tax deed holding account", for a \$0.00 difference from the official price recorded on the county tax deed. However, the purchaser provided original documentation showing the original sale of the property for \$20,000.00 and that a \$1,000.00 deposit was provided.

Your Affiant has reason to believe that Vercher engaged in a systematic, ongoing course of conduct between November 2014 and May 2021 with the intent to defraud the Columbia County Clerk of Courts of property valued in excess of \$20,000.00 but less than \$50,000.00 by false or fraudulent pretenses, a violation of F.S.S. §817.034(4)(a)(1). Your Affiant has additional reason to believe that Vercher, between November 2014 and May 2021, knowingly and intentionally obtained a benefit by falsifying official records on at least three occasions, a violation of F.S.S. §838.022(1)(a)

WHEREFORE, your Affiant prays that a warrant be issued commanding the Sheriff of Columbia County or any of his duly appointed deputies and all Sheriffs or any of their duly appointed deputies, or police officers acting within their jurisdiction, to arrest Katrina M Vercher, identified herein above, and bring her before the Court so that she may be dealt with according to law.

 #884  
RDLE Inspector Brett Lycett

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this 14<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2022.

  
Circuit Judge

*Notation: This investigation was assigned, via Executive Order 22-97, to be reviewed by the State Attorney Office of the Eighth Judicial Circuit. Assistant State Attorney Bruce Helling of the Eighth Judicial Circuit has reviewed and approved the probable cause associated with this affidavit for arrest.*