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Animal shelter employee accused of taking \$50,000 from taxpayers, audit says

By [Chris Butler](#) / May 28, 2013 / News / [No Comments](#)



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By Chris Butler | Tennessee Watchdog

NASHVILLE — An employee of a taxpayer-subsidized **Humane Society** in **Tennessee** is accused of altering receipts to conceal the theft of more than \$50,000, the state comptroller says.

No one has been charged. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is looking to the matter.

The **Morristown-Hamblen Humane Society** receives more than 72 percent of its funding from **Hamblen County** and the city of **Morristown**, the county seat.

The [comptroller's report](http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/repository/ia/morristownhamblenhumanesociety.pdf) (<http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/repository/ia/morristownhamblenhumanesociety.pdf>) found fault with the Humane Society's accounting and record-keeping procedures, which made it easier for the accused worker, who has since been fired, to take money.

According to the [National Animal Control Association](http://www.nacanet.org/contractors.html) (<http://www.nacanet.org/contractors.html>), most counties and cities privatize their animal control operations by contracting those services to a local nonprofit, and subsequently reimburse those nonprofits with taxpayer money.

County Mayor Bill Brittain told **Tennessee Watchdog** he and **Morristown Mayor Danny Thomas** are examining whether the entities should continue its contract with the local Humane Society.

“As far as complete privatization of the Humane Society goes, I don’t think that that is an option that we will be looking at,” Brittain said, although he said he knew of other Humane Societies that were completely privatized.

Hamblen County officials discovered the theft after reviewing many receipts the employee allegedly altered since 2009, according to the report.

The money should have been used to operate the animal shelter, enforce animal control ordinances and conduct animal cruelty investigations.

The employee involved had been responsible for gathering collections, matching collections with receipts and delivering those collections to the bookkeeper for deposit.

“Our primary concern right now is the oversight of the Humane Society operation by its board. The board is not appointed by either legislative body from the city or the county,” Brittain told Tennessee Watchdog.

The accused employee has refused to speak with investigators. The **TBI** will have a report in about a month, said **C. Berkeley Bell**, district attorney general for **Tennessee’s Third Judicial District**.

“When I receive the report we will review the matter and present it to the next grand jury meeting,” Bell said.

Brittain said he could not comment on how much the missing \$50,000 has affected the Humane Society’s operations.

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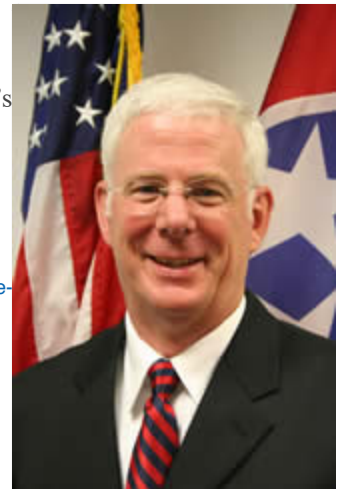
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Photo courtesy of State Comptroller's Office

Two dogs at the Morristown-Hamblen Humane Society, which will likely be affected by the theft of \$50,000 by a former employee.



(<http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2013/05/BillBrittain>)
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[Chris Butler](#)

Chris formerly served as staff reporter for Watchdog.org.

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