

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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August 22, 2013

Hon. Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Robert Hannibal
SCI Case #2013-2349

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that Robert Hannibal, a principal assigned to JHS 145 in the Bronx, misappropriated more than \$20,000 from a school bank account.¹

This investigation began on May 1, 2013, when [REDACTED] from the Chancellor's Office of Special Investigations ("OSI"), contacted the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation ("SCI") and lodged a complaint against Hannibal.

The assigned SCI investigator spoke by telephone with [REDACTED] who said that he investigated Hannibal for comingling his personal funds with the JHS 145 General School Fund ("GSF") account.² During an interview with [REDACTED] Hannibal admitted comingling his money with GSF funds and claimed to have done so as a result of marital issues. [REDACTED] said that Hannibal acknowledged withdrawing funds from the GSF account using an ATM card. [REDACTED] explained that he had only 2012 GSF bank records when he questioned Hannibal, but thereafter, he obtained records for 2010 and 2011, and discovered additional ATM activity.

¹ Hannibal retired from the Department of Education. Hannibal is not cleared for employment in the City school system at this time.

² This OSI investigation was based on a referral from SCI.

SCI investigators visited JHS 145 and spoke with Principal Hannibal who said that he was represented by his union. Hannibal asserted that he thought the matter had been resolved upon his interview at OSI. Advised that SCI was looking into the same issue for 2010 and 2011, Hannibal responded that he also put personal funds into the GSF account during both those years; Hannibal maintained that he did so because he was having marital problems and did not want his wife to know about his finances. Hannibal claimed that he may have confused his own ATM card and the GSF ATM card.

The assigned SCI investigator reviewed JPMorgan Chase bank records for the JHS 145 GSF account and determined that, from January 2010 to December 2012, Hannibal used an ATM/Debit card to withdraw approximately \$29,000 from the account, either in cash or through purchases. For the same time period, Hannibal put approximately \$8,000 of personal funds into the GSF account through the deposit of per session activity checks and two personal checks.

In an interview with investigators from this office, conducted in the presence of his union representative, Robert Hannibal said that, about three years ago, a JPMorgan Chase employee, known to him as [REDACTED], came to the school and met with him. [REDACTED] purportedly told Hannibal that the school was in good standing and qualified for an ATM/Debit card. Hannibal filled out the application at his desk and received the ATM/Debit card. Hannibal explained that the GSF account was used for student activities and the money came from fundraisers, candy sales, and donations.

Hannibal asserted that he was having marital problems and was trying to hide some of his money from his wife by putting it into the JHS 145 GSF account. Hannibal admitted that he used the ATM/Debit card associated with the GSF account to withdraw money and to make purchases. Hannibal claimed that he did not keep records to indicate the amount he comingled and did not keep records about his use of the JHS 145 ATM/Debit card.

Hannibal explained that, by direct deposit, his DOE salary was placed in the personal bank account he shared with his wife; he then withdrew cash from the joint account and deposited the money into the GSF account. Hannibal also deposited his per session activity checks into the GSF account. Hannibal said that his wife never questioned him about the funds removed from their account. Hannibal admitted that he used the GSF account as his own "piggybank," but never looked at it as stealing.

Regarding 2010, Hannibal claimed that he comingled about \$10,000 in cash taken from his salary deposits and per session checks. Hannibal then acknowledged that he could not prove he put cash into the GSF account. Advised that, in 2010, more than \$9,000 was removed from the GSF account with the ATM/Debit card, Hannibal responded that he did not recall how much he withdrew from the GSF account and did not think he could prove how much cash he put into the account.

Regarding 2011, Hannibal again asserted that he put personal funds, totaling about \$10,000, into the GSF account through a combination of per session activity checks and cash. Hannibal reiterated that he could not prove the cash deposits. Hannibal acknowledged that he could not prove that cash withdrawals from his personal account would match deposits into the GSF account.

Hannibal reviewed the ATM/Debit withdrawals from the JHS 145 GSF account made in 2011, and investigators drew his attention to purchases of wine and flowers; Hannibal then admitted he was having an affair with a now retired [REDACTED] whom he would not identify, and offered that as the explanation for the ATM/Debit card transactions. According to Hannibal, he constantly gave the woman money, bought gifts and dinners, and just spent lavishly. Hannibal asserted that it got out of control.

Regarding 2012, Hannibal said that he put about \$5,000 of his personal funds into the GSF account. Hannibal previously told [REDACTED] that he deposited about \$8,000 of his money into the school account. Hannibal repeated that he thought that it was \$5,000. Hannibal reiterated that most of the money was spent on his girlfriend, including payment of her bills.

SCI investigators spoke to Hannibal about telling the truth. Hannibal then admitted that he put only about \$5,000 of his own money into the GSF account during the three year period from 2010 to 2012. Hannibal acknowledged that this meant he spent more than \$24,000 from the GSF account funds because, from 2010 to 2012, he took \$29,344.55 from the account through cash withdraws and the purchase of merchandise and placed only \$5,000 in it.

It is the recommendation of this office that Robert Hannibal continue to be denied employment with the DOE and that this matter be considered should he apply for a position in the City school system, with one of its vendors, or in one of its facilities, in the future. Hannibal must repay the money he misappropriated from JHS 145.

We are referring our findings to Bronx County District Attorney Robert T. Johnson for whatever action he deems appropriate.

We note that the conduct described here may violate the conflicts of interest provisions of the New York City Charter which is administered by the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

We are forwarding a copy of this letter to the Office of Legal Services. We also are sending our findings to the New York State Education Department for whatever action it deems appropriate. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please


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contact First Deputy Commissioner Regina Loughran, the attorney assigned to the case. She can be reached at (212) 510-1426. Please notify First Deputy Commissioner Loughran within 30 days of receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Robert Hannibal. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. CONDON
Special Commissioner
of Investigation for the
New York City School District

By:


Regina A. Loughran
First Deputy Commissioner

RJC:RAL:gm

c: Courtenaye Jackson-Chase, Esq.
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