Report Released Today - Copies Available

School Secretaries Steal more than $200,000 in Public Funds

Today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Richard J. Condon released a report detailing an investigation which found that School Secretaries Karen Boucher and Renee Scriven, jointly and individually, siphoned more than $200,000 from the Garret A. Morgan Elementary School (PS 132) in the Bronx between September 2002 and December 2005. Boucher and Scriven were able to defraud the Department of Education (DOE) because each secretary had in her possession the necessary authorization codes which enabled them to manipulate the Small Item Payment Process (SIPP) meant for over the counter transactions, the awarding of payments for work done after school hours (per session), as well as the use of the school’s JP Morgan Chase procurement cards (P-cards).

The investigation, which began in December 2005, found that Boucher and Scriven stole more than $80,000 in SIPP funds. They kept no records to justify the payments and the amounts on all the SIPP checks remained under $500 which was the authorized limit at the school level. The SIPP checks issued to both Boucher and Scriven used variations of their married and maiden names so that the same payee would not appear too often and raise a flag. Additionally, SIPP checks totaling $11,592.49 were paid to Boucher’s personal Wal-Mart credit card account. These SIPP checks paid for Boucher’s purchases, as well as her finance charges, her late fees, and the outstanding balance on her account.

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Both secretaries, under the guise of purchasing items for the school, used the school’s P-card to order personal items which included but were not limited to printers and other computer equipment, jewelry, video games, a 19 inch television, a portable DVD player, clothing, cigarettes, light beer, holiday decorations, and personalized gifts. During the three year period, these items, among the many others which are detailed in the report, were shipped to Boucher’s home, to her summer residence, to Scriven’s home, and to the residences of their family members and friends.

Both Boucher and Scriven received unauthorized per session payments, totaling more than $115,000, for assignments they claimed to have performed after school hours. These hours were not authorized and much of the work did not take place. For example, in two instances, Boucher collected per session payments for more than 30 hours of work she would have completed while on vacation in Florida.

Commissioner Condon criticized the DOE for its lack of oversight which allowed the schemes to continue for three school years. He recommended that the DOE review its financial controls and report back to him with changes that will uncover and prevent such rampant corruption in the future.

Commissioner Condon has referred his findings to Bronx County District Attorney Robert T. Johnson for whatever action he deems appropriate. The Special Commissioner also recommended to the Chancellor that both Karen Boucher and Renee Scriven be terminated from employment with the DOE and that both be made ineligible for work in the City school system.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation is part of the New York City Department of Investigation and Special Commissioner Condon reports to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.