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Special Commissioner

NEWS RELEASE
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CORRUPTION AND FRAUD IN THE SCHOOL CUSTODIAL SYSTEM

**Press Conference
NYC Comptroller's Office
1 Centre Street, 5th Floor**

11 AM

Special Commissioner of Investigation Edward F. Stancik today releases his report entitled *Taking Their Time: An Investigation into Board of Education Custodial Time Abuse*, which details how some custodians and their employees cheated the New York City public schools of thousands of dollars and how the system enabled these employees to get away with their crimes.

Undercover video obtained by the Special Commissioner's investigators, together with their interviews of employees at Bronx High School of Science and P.S. 105 among other schools, confirmed some of the worst fears raised by Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi's audit, also being released today. In one instance, the Special Commissioner's investigators discovered an employee who stole thousands of dollars simply by manipulating the time clock at his school. In another school, a custodian instructed his staff to renovate Board property on Board time for his personal use and kept a BOE tractor on the site of his future Long Island beachfront home for weeks at a time.

The Special Commissioner thanks New York City Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi and his staff, particularly Deputy Comptroller Roger Liwer, for their effort and cooperation during the course of our joint examination into excessive overtime on the part of custodial helpers.

TAKING THEIR TIME:
**An Investigation into Board of Education
Custodial Employee Time Abuse**
March 1996

Report Highlights

Large numbers of school custodial helpers work extraordinary amounts of overtime, a fact brought to this office's attention in April 1995 by New York City Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi. Sharing the Comptroller's concern that some of the overtime may have been fraudulently earned, this office investigated custodial helpers at selected schools and uncovered the following:

Custodial fireman **Ronald Dingman**

- stole almost \$5,000 from the Board of Education in 1995. He stole the money by manipulating the time clock at P.S. 105 and by having his co-workers punch his time card for him at that school and at J.H.S. 117 where he held an evening custodial job.

- pled guilty in June 1990 to the federal crime of Obstruction of Mail after being caught stealing mail from customers on his postal route while employed as a mail carrier. Later that year the Board cleared him for continued employment despite the conviction.

- fraudulently created a time card for his brother **Peter Dingman**, causing the Board to pay Peter for work Peter never did.

- Matthew Donohue**, a former Bronx High School of Science custodian, regularly instructed his employees to work on his private projects while "on the clock" at the school. The total spent by the Board for this labor was over \$5,000. Donohue also improperly took the Bronx Science tractor to his own Southampton property, where he was building a home, saving himself as much as \$27,000 in rental fees. Donohue's theft of scarce Board dollars is all the more egregious in view of the fact that he earned over \$100,000 from the Board in 1994, and has assets in excess of one million dollars.

- Some custodial helpers, including **Salvador Ribbot**, were paid for working more than 90 hours a week in 1994. Payroll records also show that another helper, **Mark Igneri**, once worked 41 hours straight with only one break of an hour-and-a-half. And, if helper **Nicholas Desimone's** time records are accurate, for weeks at a time he had only three-and-a-half hours a day when he was not working or commuting. These employees did not have credible explanations for the amounts of overtime they earned.

- **Three violations of the Board's anti-nepotism rules**, which prohibit custodians from hiring their

relatives, were uncovered during the course of this investigation. Among the violators were Nicholas Desimone's father and uncle, custodians who hired Desimone, and custodian **Frank Ciminello** who hired his son-in-law, Ronald Dingman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Custodians should calculate their payrolls in a uniform manner no matter where they are assigned. They should also justify significant overtime earned by their employees.
- The payroll documents themselves are the property of the Board of Education and should remain in the custody of the Board, and not of the custodian, when a custodian leaves a school.
- The time clock should always be locked, and access to the key should not be permitted to anyone who uses the time clock to record his or her own time.
- Custodial supervisors should do their job. They should aggressively monitor custodians to help deter the sort of abuse uncovered here.
- The Board should review the performance of the plant managers charged with supervising custodial services at Bronx Science, P.S. 105, and the facilities where the top ten overtime earners of 1994 were employed.
- The Board should review its practice of assigning schools to custodians on a temporary care basis. A facility under temporary care does not have a full-time custodian responsible for the custodial staff, a condition that enabled Ronald Dingman to regularly abuse time.
- The Board should aggressively enforce its regulations prohibiting nepotism within the custodial work force.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SUBJECTS OF THIS REPORT

- **Ronald Dingman's** and **Peter Dingman's** employment with the Board should be terminated.
- **Matthew Donohue**, now retired, should be barred from future employment.
- **Adelaide Donohue** should be strongly disciplined.
- **Frank Ciminello** should be disciplined for violating the Board's anti-nepotism regulations in hiring his son-in-law, Ronald Dingman.
- **Dolores Watson** and **William Nagle**, who approved Dingman for employment with the Board despite his federal conviction, should be disciplined.