

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

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ANASTASIA COLEMAN  
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

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May 23, 2019

Hon. Richard A. Carranza  
Chancellor  
New York City Public Schools  
Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street, Room 314  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Karen Gorman  
SCI Case #2018-2217

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that New York City Department of Education ("DOE") Teacher Karen Gorman, assigned to the DOE District 75 office in Manhattan, conducted business for a private interior design firm, spoke with clients, and used a DOE computer for the firm's business during DOE work hours.<sup>1</sup>

**I. Investigation and Findings**

The investigation began in March 2018, when [REDACTED] contacted the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District ("SCI") and reported that Gorman met with clients and performed other tasks for an interior design business while on DOE time in and away from the District office.

SCI investigators interviewed [REDACTED] who was accompanied by a union representative. She confirmed her report to SCI and said that she was informed about Gorman [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

SCI investigators separately interviewed the [REDACTED] each of whom was accompanied by an attorney.

<sup>1</sup> Gorman was not reassigned as a result of this investigation.

[REDACTED] reported that in the past [REDACTED] years she had observed Gorman use her assigned DOE Apple Mac computer to conduct business for her design firm. [REDACTED] said that Gorman received calls related to her private business on her mobile phone, and she had seen business invoices and design plans on the screen of Gorman's DOE computer.

[REDACTED] told investigators that they observed Gorman engage in the same activities as described by [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] said that he had seen Gorman doing these tasks over the past [REDACTED] years. [REDACTED] said that he saw the same conduct over the past [REDACTED] years, and added that Gorman used the office printer to produce documents related to her design business.

SCI investigators separately interviewed [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Each reported that Gorman repeatedly engaged in private business tasks similar to those described by [REDACTED].

SCI investigators interviewed Gorman, who acknowledged that she had used her DOE computer to store files for her design business, and had used the office copier to produce personal business documents. She denied having met with private clients during her DOE work hours, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Gorman claimed that she conducted business for her firm in her DOE office after 3:00 p.m.

The SCI Director of Information Systems copied files from Gorman's assigned DOE computer and determined that beginning around April 2013 there were approximately 8,000 items related to Gorman's design business – invoices, orders, design layouts, images, pdfs, design plans, designer home furnishing descriptions, product quotes, installation quotes, and other designer related items – placed on the DOE computer.

## II. Conclusion and Recommendations

For at least seven years, during the course of her DOE workday, Karen Gorman engaged in tasks for her private interior design business from her DOE office, and used a DOE computer and printer. It is the recommendation of this office that strong disciplinary action be taken against Gorman, which may include termination from her employment.

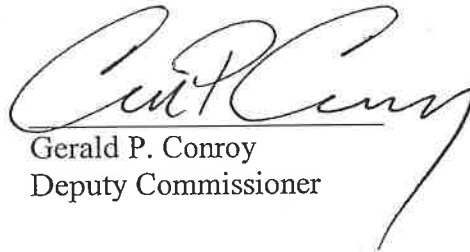
We also note that Gorman's conduct may have violated the conflicts of interest provisions of the New York City Charter, which is administered by the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

We are sending a copy of this letter to the Office of Legal Services. Should you have any inquiries concerning this matter, please contact Deputy Commissioner Gerald P. Conroy, the attorney assigned to this case. He may be reached at (212) 510-1486. Please notify Deputy Commissioner Conroy within 30 days of receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated with respect to Karen Gorman. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

ANASTASIA COLEMAN  
Special Commissioner of Investigation  
for the New York City School District

By:



Gerald P. Conroy  
Deputy Commissioner

AC:GPC:lr

c: Howard Friedman, Esq.  
Karen Antoine, Esq.  
Katherine Rodi, Esq.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

*In the Matter of*

KAREN GORMAN

Respondent.

DISPOSITION

COIB Case No. 2019-354

**WHEREAS**, the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board (the "Board") commenced an enforcement action pursuant to Section 2603(h)(1) of the City of New York's conflicts of interest law, Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter ("Chapter 68"), against Karen Gorman ("Respondent"); and

**WHEREAS**, the Board and Respondent wish to resolve this matter on the following terms,

**IT IS HEREBY AGREED** by and between the parties as follows:

1. In full satisfaction of the above-captioned matter, Respondent admits to the following:
  - a. From September 5, 1986, until September 3, 2019, I was employed by the New York City Department of Education ("DOE"), most recently as an Assistant Technology Evaluation Coordinator. Thus, at all times relevant to this matter, I was a "public servant" within the meaning of and subject to Chapter 68.
  - b. I am the owner and operator of an interior design business.
  - c. Between 2013 and 2018, I used my DOE computer to download and store more than 8,000 files related to my interior design business. Those files included invoices, floorplans, order confirmations, price quotes, contractor agreements, insurance documents, design layouts, product specification sheets, and images of design elements and home furnishings.
  - d. Between 2013 and 2018, I occasionally used a DOE photocopier to make copies for my interior design business.
  - e. Between 2013 and 2018, during my official DOE work hours, I made and received multiple telephone calls on my personal cell phone related to my interior design business and downloaded numerous business-related documents to my DOE computer.

- f. I acknowledge that, by using my DOE computer and a DOE photocopier to perform work for my interior design business, I used City resources for a non-City purpose in violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2), pursuant to Board Rules § 1-13(b), which state respectively:

No public servant shall engage in any business, transaction or private employment, or have any financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his or her official duties.

Except as provided in subdivision (c) of this section, it shall be a violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2) for any public servant to use City letterhead, personnel, equipment, resources, or supplies for any non-City purpose.

- g. I acknowledge that, by performing work for my interior design business during my DOE work hours, I used City time for a non-City purpose in violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2) cited above, pursuant to Board Rules § 1-13(a), which states:

Except as provided in subdivision (c) of this section, it shall be a violation of City Charter § 2604(b)(2) for any public servant to pursue personal and private activities during times when the public servant is required to perform services for the City.

2. After considering prior cases in which public servants used a comparable amount of City resources and City time for non-City work, the Board has determined that the appropriate penalty in this case is a fine of Seven Thousand Dollars (\$7,000).

3. In recognition of the foregoing, Respondent agrees to the following:


- a. I agree to pay a fine of Seven Thousand Dollars (\$7,000) to the Board, by money order or by cashier check, bank check, or certified check, made payable to the "New York City Conflicts of Interest Board," at the time of my signing this Disposition.
- b. I agree that this Disposition is a public and final resolution of the Board's charges against me.
- c. I knowingly waive on my behalf and on behalf of my successors and assigns any rights to commence any judicial or administrative proceeding or appeal before any court of competent jurisdiction, administrative tribunal, political subdivision, or office of the City or the State of New York or the United States, and to contest the lawfulness, authority, jurisdiction, or power of the Board in imposing the penalty which is embodied in this Disposition, and I waive any right to make any legal or equitable claims or to initiate legal proceedings of any kind against the Board, or any members or employees thereof relating to or arising out of this Disposition or the matters recited therein.

- d. I confirm that I have entered into this Disposition freely, knowingly, and intentionally, without coercion or duress, and after having had the opportunity to be represented by an attorney of my choice and having declined that opportunity; that I accept all terms and conditions contained herein without reliance on any other promises or offers previously made or tendered by any past or present representative of the Board; and that I fully understand all the terms of this Disposition.
- e. I agree that any material misstatement of the facts of this matter, including of the Disposition, by me or by my attorney or agent shall, at the discretion of the Board, be deemed a waiver of confidentiality of this matter.


4. The Board accepts this Disposition and the terms contained herein as a final disposition of the above-captioned matter only, and affirmatively states that, other than as recited herein, no further action will be taken by the Board against Respondent based upon the facts and circumstances set forth herein, except that the Board shall be entitled to take any and all actions necessary to enforce the terms of this Disposition.

5. This Disposition shall not be effective until all parties have affixed their signatures below.

Dated: 10/31/19, 2019

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Gorman  
Respondent

Dated: 11/26, 2019

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Briffault  
Chair  
NYC Conflicts of Interest Board