



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
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LUNG CHIU, CIG, CPA
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board
Dr. Robert Avossa, Superintendent
Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM: ^{KLC} Lung Chiu, Inspector General

DATE: September 13, 2016

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Final Report
Case # 16-431 Payments to Soccer Referees

In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092(6)(d), we hereby transmit the above-referenced final report.

The report addresses an allegation regarding a District employee loaning several thousands of dollars in personal funds to athletic organizations, and the organizations paying her back at a later time.

Additionally, the complainant also alleged the District employee 1) is rude, 2) is not transparent with the organizations, 3) consistently withholds payment documentation, resulting in official's pay being untimely, and 4) has not remitted payment to the complainant for services performed on December 9, 2015. Those personnel related issues were referred to the Office of Professional Standards for further action.

The results of our investigation concluded the District employee provided personal funds to the various organizations to facilitate prompt payments to athletic officials. We found no violation of law, rule or policy with the process; however, this arrangement was not a sound practice for the District.

We recommend that District management and athletic staff work together with the respective organizations to develop a process to facilitate prompt payments to all involved parties.

cc: Michael Burke, Chief Financial Officer

Office of Inspector General
The School District of Palm Beach County

Case No. 16-431

Payments to Soccer Referees

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

AUTHORITY

School Board Policy 1.092, Inspector General (4)(a)(iv) provides for the Inspector General to receive and consider complaints, and conduct, supervise, or coordinate such inquiries, investigations, or reviews as the Inspector General deems appropriate.

This investigation was conducted in compliance with the *Quality Standards for Investigations, Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*, promulgated by the Association of Inspectors General.

BACKGROUND

On April 14, 2016, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an email complaint regarding the District's Instructional Specialist -Athletics, Yetta Greene (Greene). The complainant, a former member of the Board for the Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County, alleges the District employee: 1) is very rude, in person and on the phone , demonstrating a sarcastic attitude and demeaning tone to others; 2) is not transparent with the sports provider organizations, holding high school sports schedules until the last minute; 3) consistently holds the paper work required for sport officials to be paid, resulting in the official's pay being untimely; 4) has not paid him for a game for Boynton Beach High School he worked on December 9, 2015, although several requests for pay have been submitted to Greene; 5) has loaned several "thousands of dollars" to the organization, and the organization has to pay her back each summer (up to \$10,000) at a time.

The OIG addressed allegation number #5 above; and the remaining allegations are to be addressed by the Office of Professional Standards.

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Florida Division of Corporations Records of Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County, Inc.
2. Website of Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County, Inc. (<http://www.srpbc.org/>), including page with "FAQs" and "Referee Fees for the 2015-2016 Season".
3. District's website on Athletics
4. Girls Soccer Matches in January 2016 and memorandum listing soccer officials

5. Financial Records¹, including
 - a. Invoices for Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County Soccer Tournament Official Compensation Form
 - b. Check Requisition Forms for Payments to Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County
 - c. Copies of Checks from various District High Schools Activities Accounts made payable to Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County
 - d. District Customized Transaction Reports indicating check transaction numbers, school, category (i.e., soccer body/girl), description, amount, etc.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

1. The Complainant, Bill Pinto
2. Yetta Greene, Athletics Instructional Specialist

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

Each year the District hosts various athletic tournaments sanctioned by the Florida High School Athletic Association including soccer, basketball, volleyball, baseball, and softball. These tournaments are not funded at a District level and expenses, such as referee fees, are the responsibility of each participating school, including charter and private schools.

Tournament expenses include the fees for the payment of officials to referee the games. For example, the girls and boys soccer tournaments held during January 2016, involved:

- 8 Schools
- 52 Matches
- 156 Referee Services
- 44 Individual Referees

The District's Instructional Specialist-Athletics, Greene, tracks and tallies the various events, and performs the following:

- calculation of the referee game fees to be paid by school
- calculation of the referee travel fees to be paid by school
- determination of the total amount due to each referee
- preparation of an invoice for participant schools

¹ The OIG did not audit or review Ms. Greene's personal records nor the records of the athletic organizations for the purposes of this advisory.

Greene established a process of providing personal funds to the individual athletic organizations in an effort to facilitate the prompt and efficient payments to individual referees. These organizations include the Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County, East Coast Volleyball Officials Association, East Coast Basketball League, and the East Coast Umpires Association (baseball and softball).

For the January 2016 girls and boys soccer tournament, Greene stated she advanced \$9,780 of her personal funds to the Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County. The funds were to pay the referee officials' salaries for the tournament.

Greene stated the funding she provides is a personal loan to the Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County, and the process requires her to:

- prepare and submit paperwork to the athletic organization which reflects the amount owed to each referee
- provide personal funds (primarily in the form of a personal check) to the athletic organization in an amount equal to the amount owed to the referees
- prepare and provide invoices to the participant schools
- collect checks, made payable to the athletic organization, from the participant schools
- turn over all checks collected for the respective tournament to the athletic organization
- receive payment or reimbursement from the athletic organization after checks are deposited and cleared

Greene explained that there are challenges associated with the District's payment to athletic organizations for referee services. According to Greene, the athletic organizations do not have the funds available to pay the referees until they receive payment from all participant schools.

Under the current system as explained by Greene, if she did not provide a personal loan, the organizations would need to wait to disburse referee compensation until they receive piecemeal payments, which are not, necessarily, timely processed by the various schools. According to Greene, the system results in overly complicated and untimely payment to referees, and requires unnecessary administration by the organizations' volunteer Treasurers.

Greene stated she sought to alleviate the administrative and timeliness issues by loaning her personal funds to the various athletic organizations. Greene explained that she has been loaning funds to athletic organizations for over ten years, and that originally, she loaned funds to supplement slow-paying schools. At some point, Greene began advancing the entire amount due.

Greene stated that she has historically and voluntarily advanced personal monies to many individuals and organizations as she saw fit. The arrangement between Greene and the athletic organizations involves a personal verbal agreement between her and the respective organization. The District is not a party to those agreements.

CONCLUSION

Although the OIG finds no violation of law, rule or policy for Greene to advance her personal money to various athletic organizations, we do not view this arrangement as a sound business practice for the District, particularly because the practice is directly related to her job responsibilities and could result in unintended adverse consequences. Although there is no indication District management sanctioned or was aware of this practice, best practices would not include a District employee utilizing his/her personal funds in order to meet or bridge District obligations.

The allegations referred to the Office of Professional Standards were addressed with Ms. Greene by Diana Fedderman, Director of Secondary Education. As a result, Ms. Greene will not continue the practice and a bulletin will be issued encouraging principals to remit payments immediately following games.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend District management and athletic staff work together with the appropriate athletic organizations to develop a workable solution that ensures a reasonably prompt payment to referees who provide services during District tournaments.

FURTHER ACTION

The OIG provided a draft copy of this report to Ms. Greene , who was given the opportunity to respond. A response from Ms. Greene was received. *See Exhibit 1.*

RECEIVED
JUL 27 2016
INSPECTOR GENERAL

I just wanted to send a note of explanation as to the content and timing of the April 13, 2016 E-mail from Mr. Pinto, Soccer referee in Palm Beach County, which contained complaints about my honesty, demeanor, and overall character.

In late February/early March, Mr. Pinto began an E-mail campaign against a fellow Soccer referee about whom he had a New York newspaper article from 1996 about an investigation resulting from a report of inappropriate behavior with students. Although the article did not address the findings or mention any outcome, Mr. Pinto took it upon himself to send the article to the entire Soccer community and numerous other people. He also personally came to Palm Beach County School Police since the Soccer referee had passed the Jessica Lunsford fingerprint procedure required in order to officiate our school Soccer contests. Our Police Department took the information and began to investigate.

On March 6, 2016, Mr. Pinto sent another E-mail to "Palm Beach County School Board/ Media/and Parents" (see attached) accusing the School District of inaction and stating that the "school district police should be ashamed of themselves for allowing a potential 'Sexual Predator' to slip through the cracks.....". He challenged "Parents of Palm Beach County" to attend the School Board Meeting on March 15 and "demand answers!!!!" I was disturbed by this verbal attack on our School Police. I approached the referee about whom the article had been written and asked if he had any "disposition" to clarify the issue. He did and a meeting was set up with School Police. Mr. Pinto was NOT happy with this swift resolution to this situation.


The Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County were scheduled to have a meeting on Tuesday, April 12 for election of officers for the next school year. Currently Mr. Pinto was serving as Sergeant-of-Arms and was seeking re-election. He was NOT successful in his bid for re-election, which he saw as a result of his failed E-mail campaign against his fellow Soccer official. He blamed my intervention (on no one's behalf except to facilitate the information flow) for this result. The letter against me was sent the day following the meeting.

The investigator from the Inspector General's Office did contact the current President of the Soccer Referees of Palm Beach County. Mr. Golba also felt that the above-mentioned issues were possible reasons for the April 13 E-mail from Mr. Pinto, who has been a Soccer Referee with the Soccer Officials of Palm Beach County for at least six years.

I have worked for the School District of Palm Beach County for over forty years. I have served in numerous positions as teacher (perhaps my personal favorite), extracurricular sponsor/coach, assistant principal, as well as athletic specialist for the District. My main purpose has always been to facilitate the best possible situations and outcomes for our students as well as for those educators and community representatives serving in various roles to support our overall efforts.

Thank you for this opportunity to communicate concerning this situation.

Sincerely,


July 27, 2016



7/25/2016

School District of Palm Beach County Mail - Board Member Request-Response Chuck Shear-Non-Agenda

Begin forwarded message:

From: Bill <bpinkow18@gmail.com>
Date: March 6, 2016 at 7:46:54 PM EST
Cc: bpinkow18@gmail.com
Subject: Soccer Referee arrested for sex abuse

Palm Beach County School Board/ Media/ and Parents,

It has recently been brought to my attention that a Soccer Referee from the Soccer Referees Of Palm Beach County was arrested for Sexual Abuse of Children and Endangering the welfare of a child while he was teaching for the New York City School System back in 1996. The individual in question moved to South Florida shortly thereafter and began officiating High School, Middle School, and Private School Games for the Palm Beach County School District.

As a Law Enforcement Officer for over (15) years, I am deeply disturbed that this individual was able to pass the School District Police's Background Check and gain access to our students so easily. I did ask a school district official how this could happen and their response was as follows: "Well this happened before the Jessica Lunsford act came into law, so it's no big deal". My response was "Are you kidding me, you put the safety of our children at risk!"

I have been a resident of Palm Beach County for over (15) years and a taxpayer in the Palm Beach County School District. I currently have two boys ages 11 and 14 who currently go to Polo Park Middle School in Wellington and a daughter who went through the Palm Beach County School System and is graduating college this may and she is currently an Assistant Varsity Girls High School Coach for a local high school.

I am deeply disturbed that the School District of Palm Beach County would allow someone with an arrest for those charges to be around our children. The school district police should be ashamed of themselves for allowing a potential "Sexual Predator" to slip through the cracks and be around thousands of our children over the years putting their safety at risk. I am challenging the School Board to remedy this situation ASAP and put a better checks and balance in place for volunteers, employees, and contractors prior to letting them be exposed to our children.

I am challenging the Parents of Palm Beach County to attend the School Board Meeting at The Palm Beach County School District on March 15, 2016 and demand answers!!!! Please pass this along to anyone who has a child currently enrolled in the Palm Beach County Schools as this should be of a great concern to all.

Thanks,

Respectfully Yours,

Bill Pinto
(561)324-3987