



State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

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FORMER FAYETTE COUNTY SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE SUPERVISOR AND TWO OTHERS INDICTED ON FELONY CHARGES FOLLOWING COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATION

The former supervisor for the Fayette County Schools food service department and two others have been indicted on theft charges following an investigation by the state Comptroller's Division of County Audit with the assistance of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

Inappropriate transactions involving the trio resulted in a theft of more than \$177,000 from the Fayette County School Department, the investigation found.

The investigation revealed that Anita Joyce Owen, the former food service supervisor, had made numerous unauthorized payments for pest control services to Arnett Montague Sr. These transactions included double-billing and payments for services not performed. There were also indications she had received kickbacks from Montague, who wasn't properly licensed to provide pest control services when most of the payments were made.

In addition, Owen made improper payments to a part-time cafeteria employee by altering timesheets. Owen added hours to the timesheets of cafeteria worker Jerlene Jones that Jones had not worked, resulting in improper payments of thousands of dollars. There was also evidence Owen received kickbacks from Jones.

The Fayette County Grand Jury returned indictments against Owen, Montague and Jones on March 22. Owen faces one count of theft over \$60,000; two counts of theft between \$10,000 and \$60,000 and one count of official misconduct. Montague faces one count of theft over \$60,000; one count of impersonation of a licensed professional; one count of pest control activities without a license and one count of violation of a business charter requirement. Jones faces two counts of theft between \$10,000 and \$60,000.

Two days after the indictments were issued, Owen resigned from her job.

"I'm pleased that our investigation has put a stop to the misappropriation of public funds," County Audit Director Jim Arnette said. "I hope this case will serve as a reminder to others who work in positions of public trust that they should not abuse that trust. If they do, our auditors are

committed to finding them.”

“Theft of taxpayer dollars is obviously unacceptable under any circumstances,” Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. “This case is particularly troublesome because the three defendants allegedly stole money from the school system’s central cafeteria fund. This fund includes federal dollars that are used to provide breakfasts and lunches to low-income children. I applaud the work of the Division of County Audit and the TBI for bringing this situation to light.”

To read the full report, go to: <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/repository/CA/2009/Special Report Fayette Co Food.pdf>

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