



Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

Investigative Report

Investigator: Breno Penichet

Case Number: K14-076	Case Name: Public Housing and Community Development.	<u>Date Open:</u> November 10, 2014	CASE CLOSED Date: <u>3/23/15</u>
Complainant(s): Anonymous	Subject(s): Katrena Whitney		

Allegation(s):

The COE received an anonymous complaint from a concerned citizen advising that Ms. Katrena Whitney (Whitney), a current employee in the Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development Agency, (PHCD) and an applicant for promotion possibly to the position of Assistant Director of that agency, has an outstanding unpaid debt to the County as a result of her having been a prior Section 8 tenant. It is also alleged that she may have used her position to avoid paying the debt.

Relevant Ordinances:

Exploitation of official position, Sec. 2-11.1(g), Miami-Dade Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance: "No person included in the terms defined in Subsection (b) (1) through (6) and (b) (13) shall use or attempt to use his or her official positive to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others..."

Investigation:

COE Investigator Penichet reviewed the information received by the COE. (Whitney COE Investigator reviewed Whitney's personnel file, in order to determine if there was any record of the debt, the file did not contain any mention of any money being owed to Miami Dade County. Whitney's file revealed that she was hired to work in the Applicant Leasing Center in 2003. The file also contained several Personnel change documents showing a promotion to an Administrative Analyst position, and then a return back to the previous classification.

Further investigation revealed that in November 2005 a "**Final Judgment for Removal of Tenant**" under case# 05-5332 CC 06 (06) was issued in the County Court in Miami-Dade County. It was also found that on October 16th 2006 there was a "**Notice of Voluntary Dismissal**" issued under the same case number by the same court of jurisdiction. Investigator Penichet contacted the Law firm that handled the case on behalf of Miami-Dade County "Clyne & Associates P.A." In order to ascertain who authorized the waiving of payment. According to Mr. Reggie Clyne the only person that could authorize the waiver was the client, but because the case was over ten (10) years old there was no record of who the actual person was.

Interviews

Mr. Michael Anderson
Senior Human Resources Manager
Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD).
(786) 469-4296.

Mr. Michael Anderson (Anderson) was contacted and advised of the nature of the investigation. Anderson voluntarily agreed to meet with COE investigators and provide information regarding the investigation. Anderson advised that he was aware of the allegations made against Whitney, but advised they were not accurate. Anderson advised Whitney presently works for the Applicant Leasing Center, that she in no way has access to any payment or any money owed by tenants. Anderson further stated Whitney applied for PHCD Operations /Admin Analyst position, and after her interview was rated by the panel as highly qualified. Anderson advised that because of a mix up during the review of her file, she was subsequently demoted when the mistake was discovered; Anderson made it clear that it was not because of any money owed to the County. Anderson further advised that he reviewed the file and found that, Whitney was evicted and a "Final Judgment for removal of Tenant" was issued in County Court on 11/10/2005. Anderson provided copies of all the documents pertinent to this investigation. Anderson advised that he would be leaving County employment and referred this investigation to Ms. Mari Saydal-Hamilton.

Ms. Mari Saydal-Hamilton

Assistant Director
Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD).
(786) 469-4156.

Ms. Mari Saydal-Hamilton (Saydal-Hamilton) was contacted and advised of the nature of the investigation. Saydal-Hamilton voluntarily agreed to speak with COE investigators and provide information regarding the investigation. Saydal-Hamilton advised that she was aware of the allegations made against Whitney. Saydal-Hamilton was requested to set up a meeting with Whitney. Saydal-Hamilton assigned Ms. Sharon Montealegre from the office of compliance to work with the COE investigators.

Ms. Sharon Montealegre
Compliance Reviewer
Administration, Compliance Unit
Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD).
(786) 469-4293.

Ms. Sharon Montealegre (Montealegre) was contacted and advised of the nature of the investigation. Montealegre voluntarily agreed to speak with COE investigators and provide information regarding the investigation. Montealegre advised that she was aware of the allegations made against Whitney. Montealegre was requested to set up a meeting with Whitney, and also provide other background information. Montealegre set up the interview for January 12, 2015 at 1pm.

Ms. Katrena Whitney
Applicant Leasing Center
Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD).
(786) 469-4293.

Whitney was advised of the nature of the investigation, and voluntarily agreed to speak with COE investigators, and provide information. Whitney advised that she has been employed by PHCD since 2003, in Public Housing & Community Development. Whitney advised that her job does not involve issuing or handling money or vouchers, she does not have any type of access to financial records. Whitney stated that she applied for housing assistance in 2003, and vacated the property sometime in 2006.

Whitney advised that she was paying her rent but began to experience financial problems; Whitney also stated her mother became ill and she had to care for her. Whitney advised that she received a notification in the form of a letter, but when she tried to resolve the matter with the building manager she was advised the matter would be resolved. Whitney advised that a few months later she was evicted.

Whitney advised that she was never told to pay any- money back, nor was there ever any arrangements made to take money owed from her pay.

Note: Present during the interview was Ms. Montealegre and Mr. Angel C. Sanchez.

Document/Audio/Video Review:

1. Tenant Accounting sheet for Katrena Whitney showing dates and payments for MDC property.
2. Civil Court System Docket Information for Miami-Dade County Court Case No. 13-2005-CC-5332-05
3. Notice of Voluntary Dismissal: Case #13-2005-CC-5332-05
4. Final Judgment for Removal of Tenant: Case #13-2005-CC-5332-05
5. Human Resources Division/ Interview Banding Sheet for PHCD Operations/Admin Analyst.
6. MDC Personnel Change Documents

Conclusion(s):

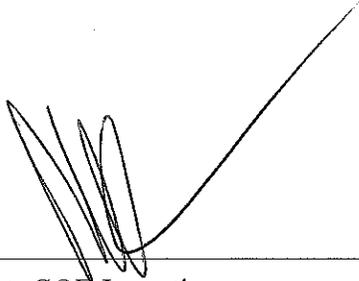
As a result of the interviews and the records check it appears that Whitney did not attempt to exploit her position, in fact the issue of how such a person that owes the county a debt, being under consideration for appointment as Assistant Director of a county agency is false.

The allegation that Whitney attempted to use her position to avoid paying the money is also false. All the information available shows that Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development Agency voluntarily dismissed the charges against Whitney when she was evicted from her apartment.

After discussing and showing the COE Advocate Michael Murawski all the information gathered, he advised that no further action is needed, due to the fact that it appears there were no violations related to the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. Accordingly, it is recommended that no further action would be taken.

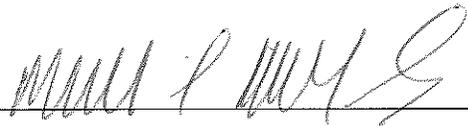
Case Closed.

(Signature)

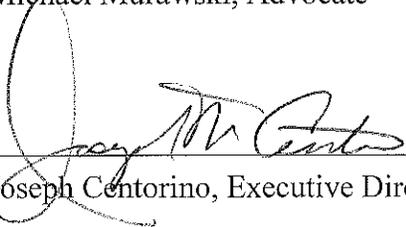


Breno Penichet, COE Investigator

Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

3/23/15
Date Closed