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Parks improved employment systems but more work remains

News Article

Fraud Hotline Follow-Up

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Our 2020 Fraud Hotline investigation found that Portland Parks and Recreation rehired the retired City golf courses director but wasted money and broke City rules in the process. This follow-up looks at the progress Parks and Recreation has made to implement recommended changes.

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A Fraud Hotline investigation in 2020 found that Portland Parks and Recreation rehired the retired City golf courses director but wasted money and broke City rules in the process. The reemployment lacked justification and was improperly documented. The rehired employee also had no supervisor, produced substandard work, worked on unauthorized projects, and billed double the hours allowed.

Our recommendations to Portland Parks & Recreation focused on ensuring compliance with City rules and improving its employment systems. Parks

implemented two recommendations, but three still need action.

Recommendation Status: Implemented

Documentation systems were better



We recommended that Parks document retirees rehired by the Bureau with the appropriate hiring forms and a formal offer letter. Parks began to use new technology to manage hiring in June 2020. The tool requires positions be filled using appropriate paperwork, which is reviewed by managers and Bureau of Human Resources staff. Parks also said it began using a formal offer letter when rehiring retirees intended to document the terms and expectations of the employment agreement.

Recommendation Status: Implemented

Supervisors were assigned



We recommended Parks assign a supervisor to each working retiree to ensure terms of employment were monitored, including hours worked and assigned tasks completed. Parks provided evidence showing that Bureau employees, including working retirees, have assigned supervisors in the central payroll system. However, we remain concerned that supervision may not be sufficient because the bureau did not implement the following recommendation, which called for supervisory review of timesheets.

Recommendation Status: Not Implemented

No supervisory approval on timesheets



We recommended Parks require supervisors to approve employee timesheets in writing. City human resources rules require managerial review and approval of timesheets to ensure accurate submissions and employee pay in accordance with City policy. Each bureau must establish and maintain time entry review and approval systems that meet City minimum requirements. The bureau did not take steps to implement this recommendation even though the investigation showed the City paid the retiree double the hours expected, totaling \$25,835 in extra pay.

Parks said technology limitations complicated its timesheet approval processes for seasonal, causal, and working retiree employees. The bureau said its payroll coordinator has considered an email- or paper-based timesheet approval system but has not acted.

Recommendation Status: Not Implemented

Policies need review for rule compliance



We recommended Parks review its payroll and appointment procedures for compliance with City rules and document them as required. Parks did not implement this recommendation.

Parks said it reviews its payroll and appointment procedures on an ongoing basis but provided no evidence in support of its assertion. For example, Parks did not provide us with a bureau-specific time review and approval process, which is required by City rules.

Recommendation Status: In Process

Training delayed by COVID-19



We recommended Parks train supervisors on rules related to limited term, temporary, and double-filled positions; working retirements; teleworking; and use of City information technology systems.

Parks said it provided telework training but not the others. The bureau said it prioritized diversity, equity, and inclusion training in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial justice movement. The bureau said it was adding the other recommended trainings to its Fiscal 2021-22 calendar.

[View the hotline tip report and recommendations summary](#)

About the Fraud Hotline

The City Auditor's Office administers the Fraud Hotline so people can confidentially and anonymously report suspected fraud, waste, and abuse of position regarding the City government. You can reach the Hotline online at www.PortlandFraudHotline.com or by phone at 866-342-4148.