



**Internal Audit Division
Finance Department
DeKalb County**

**RECREATION, PARKS AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

**SPECIAL REVIEW
HIRING IRREGULARITIES
COMPLAINTS**

NOVEMBER 2016

Page intentionally left blank



**Finance Department
Internal Audit Division**

**Interim Chief
Executive Officer**

Lee May

**Board of
Commissioners**

District 1
Nancy Jester

District 2
Jeff Rader

District 3
Larry Johnson

District 4
Sharon Barnes Sutton

District 5
Mereda Davis Johnson

District 6
Kathie Gannon

District 7
Vacant

TRANSMITTAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 10, 2016
TO: Marvin F. Billups,
Interim Director of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs
FROM: Cornelia Louis, Deputy Director of Finance-Internal Audit
SUBJECT: Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs
RE: Hiring Irregularities Complaints

Attached is the report of a Hiring Irregularities review, which was conducted due to hotline complaints. The findings, conclusions, and recommendation were discussed with you during the Exit Conference on November 10, 2016.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs and Human Resources during the course of this review. If you have any questions about the audit or this report, please feel free to contact me at 404-371-2639.

Sincerely,



Cornelia Louis

cc: Appendix C



Table of Contents

GENERAL INFORMATION-----	2
PURPOSE AND SCOPE -----	3
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION -----	4
FINDINGS -----	4
CONCLUSIONS -----	6
RECOMMENDATIONS-----	7
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE -----	8
APPENDIX A – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-----	10
APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS -----	11
APPENDIX C – DISTRIBUTION LIST-----	12



GENERAL INFORMATION

Internal Audit received several anonymous complaints regarding the hiring practices at Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs (RPCA). These complaints were:

1. The Director rehired a former employee to their former position, which the posting for the position was closed, without requiring the former employee to apply or interview for the position. The Director will promise jobs to employees before the jobs are posted.
2. The Director has promoted unqualified employees while not promoting qualified employees.
3. The Program Director (PD) selects individuals to interview, hire, and promote, sometimes against employee's recommendations. Also, the PD selected a candidate with whom she was "personally involved."¹ One such employee had lived with the PD at one point and received three promotions within two years.
4. The PD once hired a family of five at the same time, but the Director became aware and terminated four of the five.
5. One complainant applied for multiple positions; he or she did not receive a call or interview. Management tries to intimidate employees; if a location does not have enough employees to complete assigned work, management threatens to terminate employee(s) if tasks are not completed.

Hiring

Positions in DeKalb County Government are generally filled on a competitive basis. "The chief executive shall adopt administrative procedures for the filling of a vacancy by selection on a competitive basis of a permanent employee, and for transfers and demotions. Selection shall be made by the department head and reported to the director who will notify the applicant."² Some positions are filled by transfers of existing employees. "A vacancy may be filled by the transfer of a permanent or probation employee from another position of the same class or a comparable class..."³

An employee may be rehired within two years of separation. "A regular employee who has resigned in good standing may be a candidate for reappointment for a period of two years from the date of separation. Reappointment may be to the same classification the employee held at the time of separation or to any classification with a pay grade equivalent to or less than the former classification."⁴

¹ Taken from the Complaint

² DeKalb County Code of Ordinances, Sec. 20-121

³ DeKalb County Code of Ordinances, Sec. 20-123

⁴ H.R. Administrative Procedures, III-4, Reappointments



PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of our review was to examine the facts obtained and determine if violation(s) of the County code or other policies exist.

We interviewed RPCA personnel and reviewed Human Resources (HR) personnel files and hiring/position records.



FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION

FINDINGS

1. Rehire

In June 2004, B.R. was hired as the Recreation Center Director at the Tucker Recreation Center and was promoted to Recreation Program Manager (RPM) in May 2006 due to the resignation of the RPM incumbent. In January 2015, B.R. resigned to take a position in another state, but was rehired by RPCA as RPM in May 2015 at the same salary as she had before resigning.

2. Unqualified Promotions

Two examples of questioned promotions were provided:

Parks Maintenance Construction Supervisor (PMCS)

RR was promoted to PMCS in June 2016. The complainant alleges that RR was promoted over employees that are more qualified and is trained on his/her job duties by subordinates.

Basic requirements for a Construction Supervisor are as follows:

- (1) High school diploma or GED, with additional vocational training in a construction-related trade and
- (2) Four years' experience in construction, maintenance, or a related field, which includes one year as a lead worker or supervisor.

Applications for three applicants for the PMCS position with experience similar to RR's were reviewed. RR's experience is compared to that of one of those applicants, QM, in the chart below:

APPLICANT	RR (Promoted)	QM
Yrs with County	5 yrs	8 yrs
Related Field Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 yrs as Crew Worker • 3 yrs as Equipment Operator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 yrs as Grounds Services Technician • 1 yr as Equipment Operator Senior
Supervisory Experience	None	1 yr as Crew Supervisor

Arts Center Director

An RPCA employee stated that EB was promoted to Arts Center Director in October 2014 over CB, who was much more qualified.



Basic requirements for the Arts Center Director position are as follows:

- (1) Bachelor's degree in Arts Administration, Business, Public Administration, or a related field.
- (2) Three years of experience in arts and culture program management or a related field, one of which must have included supervisory experience.

A comparison of qualifications in the employees' applications and DeKalb Personnel files shows the following:

APPLICANT	EB (Promoted)	CB
Yrs with County	4.5 yrs with the County	7 yrs with the County
Education Experience	No college degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS-Bus Admin • Arts Mgmt. Certificate (Kennedy Center)
Related Field Experience	3 yrs as a Business/Political Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 yr as a Business Manager • 3 yrs as Managing Director (dance company) • 1 yr as Arts Management Fellow (Kennedy Center)
County Experience	4.5 yrs as Special Project Coordinator (RPCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 yrs as Public Outreach Coordinator (RPCA) • 3 yrs as Arts Center Coordinator (RPCA)

3. Personal Relationship

Numerous RPCA employees were interviewed regarding hiring and promotion practices. All made negative comments about management's hiring and promoting practices. In addition, all employees stated that promotions were unfair and based on personal feelings or persons from the outside were brought in rather than promoting from within. No specific examples were given except for the two summarized above.

Concerning the complaint that one employee (KH) had lived with the PD and was given three promotions in two years –

- Addresses from dates of hire, June 2004, to current for the PD and from March 2006 to current for KH were compared with no matching addresses or the same towns.
- Since hired as a permanent employee (from temporary) in November 2009, KH was given a 6-month salary increase in May 2010 and a promotion to an acting/interim position in October 2011 (with salary increase), which was made permanent in September 2013.



4. Family Hiring

A listing of all hires (1,387) by RPCA was obtained for the period January 2012 through June 2015. The schedule was reviewed for individuals with the same last name and their hiring dates. No instances were found of family hiring at the same time. However, if the hiring was interrupted by the Director as alleged, evidence of such may not exist in the hiring records.

5. Multiple Applications and Intimidation

Since no specific details were given in the complaint, we could neither substantiate nor refute the allegations. During interviews, staff could not provide further details on management threats.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on interviews of staff and evidence reviewed, we conclude the following:

1. Rehire

This rehire was found to be within HR Hiring Policy guidelines.

2. Unqualified Promotions

In both examples provided, due to their education, related experience, and supervisory experience, other applicants appear more qualified compared to the selected candidate.

3. Personal Involvement

There is no evidence that the individuals in question had ever lived together. Also, KH only received two salary increases in four years instead of the alleged three pay increases in two years. Both increases were within HR Policy guidelines.

However, there is a pervasive perception among RPCA staff that promotions are unfair and given to "outsiders" rather than promoting from within.

3. Family Hiring

There is no evidence that an entire family of five persons was hired during the period January 2012 through June 2015.

5. Multiple Applications and Intimidation

With no examples given, other than those mentioned above, we could not substantiate the claim.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Although all allegations could not be proven or substantiated, there is evidence that the best experienced/qualified candidates may not have been selected; and there is a perception among RPCA employees that hiring and promotions are unfair.

Commitment to *Competence, Integrity, and Ethical Values* are principles of the **Control Environment**, which is a component of the Internal Control System. "According to the first internal control standard, which relates to control environment, management and employees should establish and maintain an environment throughout the organization that sets a positive and supportive attitude toward internal control and conscientious management."⁵

Commitment to Competence includes "The [agency] organization has performed analyses of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform jobs appropriately. Consider the following:

- The knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for various jobs have been identified and made known to employees.
- Evidence exists that the agency attempts to assure that employees selected for various positions have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities."⁶

Integrity and Ethical Values include "Management fosters and encourages an [agency] organization culture that emphasizes the importance of integrity and ethical values. This might be achieved through oral communications in meetings, via one-on-one discussions, and by example in day-to-day activities."⁷

We recommend RPCA examine and improve their hiring and promoting practices to:

- (1) Foster a perception by employees of conscientious management through their day-to-day activities, and
- (2) Ensure that employees with the best knowledge, skills, and abilities are selected for all positions; with the goal of creating a more effective internal control environment.

We further recommend that RPCA provide training relating to hiring and promoting practices to all management and supervisor.

⁵ GAO-Internal Control Management and Evaluation Tool (GAO-01-1008G), Page 9

⁶ GAO Internal Control Management and Evaluation Tool (GAO-01-1008G), Page 12

⁷ GAO-Internal Control Management and Evaluation Tool (GAO-01-1008G), Page 10



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

1. Rehire

Agree with finding and conclusion

2. Unqualified Promotions

(A.) Park Maintenance Construction Supervisor – I agree that the initial finding. Clearly, suggests that (QM) appears to have edge over (RR) in years of service with the County and experience as a crew supervisor. What is missing from this evaluation of the applicants is the rating of the interview team. I met with an employee very recently with a complaint that he was passed up and a person with less knowledge of parks maintenance was hired. I interview the entire interview team and all expressed surprise at the performance of the in-house candidate. I believe that on occasions, the edge is lost or gained during ones interview.

(B.) Art Center Director – Clearly, the Department did not take in consideration the applicants' education or experience in making this temporary promotion. More care will be exercised in the future in the selection of employees to serve in temporary capacities. I do not want to speculate as to what may have been the motivator beyond the comments provided during our review of the draft. It is clear that I was out of the loop as I was not aware that there was a classification change during her interim assignment.

3. Personal Relationships

I have heard that same rumor over the years. I am not aware if such comments were ever investigated. Like most rumors they sometime become their own "truth" and never fade away. I do take more seriously, the perception that the hiring and promotions process within the Department is unfair, predetermined before the posting of positions, and controlled by the wishes of the departmental staff and /or the Office of the Director. I can assure that a great deal of my energy and attention will be to ensure that we have a fair and impartial process. I realize that the current perception is our employee's reality and it will not change if this issue is not addressed in earnest.

4. Family Hiring

Concur with conclusion

5. Multiple Applications and Intimidation

Concur with the conclusion. Be assured that the complaints may stem from the claims made in number 3 and know that I will be vigilant in monitoring the process for best practice and fairness throughout the hiring process.



Approvals:

Original Signed by:

Cornelia Louis
Deputy Director of Finance
Internal Audit Division
Department of Finance
DeKalb County



Appendix A – Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of Recreation Parks and Cultural Affairs and Human Resources for their assistance during this engagement.

Conducted by:

A. Murray Walters
Principal Auditor
Finance Department - Internal Audit Division

Reviewed by:

Cornelia Louis
Deputy Director of Finance
Finance Department - Internal Audit Division



APPENDIX B – DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms and Abbreviation

RPCA	DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs
HR	DeKalb County Department of Human Resources
PD	Program Director
RPM	Recreational Program Manager
PMCS	Parks Maintenance Construction Supervisor
GED	General Educational Development

Key Definitions

GED - The GED test is a substitute in most states for a High School diploma. It is accepted by most employers as equivalent educational experience as a diploma.

Control Environment - "the foundation for an internal control system. It provides the discipline and structure, which affect the overall quality of internal control. It influences how objectives are defined and how control activities are structured. The oversight body and management establish and maintain an environment throughout the entity that sets a positive attitude toward internal control."⁸



APPENDIX C – DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report has been distributed to the following individuals:

DeKalb County Board of Commissioners

Lee May, Interim Chief Executive Officer

Zachary L. Williams, Chief Operating Officer/ Executive Assistant

Dianne McNabb, Interim Chief Financial Officer

Stacey Kalberman, Director – Board of Ethics