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Hallandale Beach firing chronically absent city manager

By Jennifer Gollan, Sun Sentinel

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Longtime Hallandale Beach City Manager Mike Good is being fired after failing to show up for work off and on since January. He is entitled to a severance package that could cost taxpayers \$306,893, according to the city.

City commissioners cited chronic absences, an uncommunicative work style and questionable contracts as reasons for his dismissal.

Good, 48, could not be reached for comment despite three messages left at his home and office.

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"It is long overdue," said Commissioner Keith London on Thursday. "The untold secret all around town is that guy does not show up for work."

Indeed, Mayor Joy Cooper said Good's ouster was somewhat delayed because he refused to schedule it for commission discussion over the last six weeks.

City commissioners on Wednesday night suspended Good for 45 days. He has five days to request a public hearing to appeal the decision. If he does not respond, the commission will likely move to fire Good in the next 30 days.

Assistant City Manager Mark Antonio was named interim city manager. The city is working out how much he will earn as part of a new contract.

Good joined the city in March 1985 as a welder and rose through the ranks, becoming city manager in November 2002. His total compensation last year for salary, pension, health benefits and other insurance and car allowance was roughly \$275,139.

He drew stiff criticism in December 2008 when he grossed \$422,373 in salary and benefits. That sum included \$176,054 in accrued vacation and sick time he collected after he resigned, only to be re-hired days later. At the time, the city reasoned it would save money by halting contributions to his pension plan, which promised retirees a set benefit.

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Commissioners on Wednesday offered Good five months of severance worth roughly \$88,547. He is also entitled to health insurance for him and his family until he is eligible for Medicare at 62, and tuition and books so he can complete his masters degree in public administration.

Good is not owed any money for unused sick and vacation time, Antonio said, adding that it is not clear how many unpaid days Good took.

The deal is still pending Good's approval.

In a telephone interview, Cooper said Good stopped consistently turning up for work in January and then he took family medical leave for two weeks, using sick and vacation time. His attendance failed to improve, leading commissioners to take preliminary steps to fire him Wednesday.

London said he was also troubled by some of Good's actions. For example, he said Good approved a yearlong contract worth at least \$36,000 with consultant Joseph Kessel but failed to inform the commission. City rules require the city manager to report such expenditures to commissioners each month.

"The city manager's obligation is to report to us when he uses his spending authority," London said. "He is breaking the city ordinance. This is city taxpayer money."

The July 2008 contract calls for Kessel, a Realtor with Keller Williams, to assist the city manager with finances, public relations, growth management, and strategic planning.

Prior to becoming a Realtor, Kessel was a chief operating officer for Esat Corporation, a Melbourne-based healthcare technology company that went bankrupt in the dot com bust; and an executive vice president at Sequoia Corporation, a healthcare technology company bought by Fort Lauderdale-based [Citrix Systems](#), Inc.

London said he had asked Good for documents showing how much Kessel has earned, but never received them.

Cooper said she had "no issue" with the contract.

"I was aware that Joe Kessel was doing work under contract," Cooper said. "He was contracted with the city manager to work on the purchase of a property for Sunset Park a year and a half ago. And he also worked on redoing the Golden Isles Tennis Center."

Cooper said she could not explain why other commissioners did not know about the contract, not could she provide details on how Kessel helped clinch either deal.

In an interview, Kessel said he received only \$4,200 around the end of 2008.

"I don't know what the big to-do is," said Kessel, who also serves on the Hallandale Beach Area Chamber of Commerce board.

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mrfine00 at 10:34 AM May 21, 2010

Ridiculous spending on these joking officials. Fire them all.

ELAINE at 10:33 AM May 21, 2010

What a joke...and we wonder why govt. is broke on every level...I wish I could get fired and take \$306,000 with me on my way out. When we "regular" people lose our jobs, we have to live off off our savings, IF there is any...OR try to get unemployment...which is another joke...Meanwhile a city official does not show up for work, gets fired and gets a severance pay. What the he** is wrong with this country?

anonymail777 at 9:44 AM May 21, 2010

From a welder to a \$275k a year City Manager! What a joke. Only in city and state government. We have idiot employees and commissioners runniig our cities. And government employees have the cajones to complain about being underpaid. This raping of the taxpayer has to stop!!!!!!

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