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Two Mentor employees fired, one disciplined

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Workers accused of misusing police LEADS system

The attorney for a Mentor police records room employee says his client shouldn't have been fired from her job.

On Friday, two city employees who worked in Mentor police records room were terminated, and a third records room employee was suspended for six days for what city officials decided was wrongful use of the Law Enforcement Automated Data System.

The system, most commonly referred to as LEADS, is a data base used by police to retrieve personal information. It is generally used by officers for work in the line of duty.

Mentor Law Director Richard Hennig identified the two employees who were terminated as Sylvia Wawrowski and her supervisor Tanya Brehun.

Lona Brown received a six-day suspension, the law director said.

Mentor City Manager John Konrad said the deciding factor that led to the firing of Wawrowski and Brehun was that they tried to conceal what they did after the fact.

Konrad said they ran a license plate from a vehicle belonging to Wawrowski's husband, who apparently was not living with his wife, and used it to retrieve his address.

The man filed a complaint with the city earlier this month.

Hennig and Konrad said the city thoroughly documented and investigated the complaint and determined there was misuse of the LEADS system by the employees who were disciplined.

Attorney Ron Graham, a former longtime Mentor city prosecutor who represents Wawrowski, said his client is going through a painful divorce.

Graham said he told city officials about her situation during a hearing Thursday and that he wanted to get her help.

"What the city has done is troubling to me," Graham said. "No one has been disciplined this harshly because of a LEADS violation and there have been others."

Graham maintains Wawrowski did not access the system herself.

The attorney said his client hadn't been able to locate her husband and that Brehun provided the address.

"Anyone in that situation would have taken the information," Graham said. "Then she told me she destroyed the information and it was never disseminated."

A telephone listing for Brehun and Brown could not be located Sunday night.

Konrad said Brown was involved to the extent that she got a temporary license tag number from a truck belonging to Wawrowski's husband, but she did not act on the information and did not conceal her involvement in the case.

Wawrowski and Brehun did attempt to conceal their involvement and that was the major difference in their level of punishment, Konrad said.

Hennig said the city's decision to fire the two employees and suspend a third was not excessive.

"This is a very serious matter," he said. "There is a criminal code that applies to what they did."

Hennig said misuse of LEADS information is a fifth-degree felony.

Graham plans to continue his own investigation and is looking into other avenues such as filing a lawsuit in federal court that would allege the city violated her civil rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"She is suffering a mental disability because of this divorce," Graham said.

Hennig said it's Graham's prerogative to file a lawsuit.

"I would note that he has stated ... that he is aware of misuse of LEADS in the past, so he must have personal knowledge," the law director said.

Hennig said if Graham were to argue a case that would involve personal knowledge it would disqualify him because he would be a witness in the case.

Graham said he will investigate whether there have been other cases of LEADS violations and plans to contact the Ohio Highway Patrol in Columbus.

Konrad said Sunday night that he knows of at least one other instance in the city involving misuse of LEADS.

"I think there was one brought up and it was handled, it was just mentioned by the chief of police, Dan Llewellyn, but it's my understanding there was no attempt to conceal what they did," the city manager said. "That's a big factor."

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James Hamilton, staff lieutenant for LEADS, told The News-Herald on Friday that at the time he was unaware of any situation in Mentor. He said if there was a situation, his agency would possibly recommend the city to take action, but ultimately LEADS would leave it up the city to decide if there would be action or punishment.

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