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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

January 30, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### \$9-MILLION PENSION FUND TRANSFER RAISES QUESTIONS

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A top aide to Mayor Woodrow Stanley says the city of Flint has forwarded \$9 million to its pension system after failing to make the transfers for about six months.

"I guarantee the system will be made whole," said City Administrator David Ready. "We found the problem. We corrected it."

Two members of the City Council said Friday they want more information about what happened and why the transfers from an escrow account didn't happen every two weeks as they should have.

Fifth Ward Councilman Barry Williams said members of the Flint Employees Retirement System Board of Trustees agreed this week to have auditors examine the late transfer as well.

Williams, a member of the retirement board, said the error appears to have been "an honest mistake," which administration officials discovered and made public.

Mark Smith and Georgia Steinhoff, two other members of the retirement board, could not be reached for comment. The board meets monthly to oversee Flint's retirement system.

Ready, who serves as chairman of the retirement board, said a Finance Department employee responsible for making the transfer failed to, and Finance Director **Marc Puckett** only recently recognized the error.

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The principal and interest have been transferred to the proper account, he said. If auditors determine additional interest is due, it will be transferred as well.

Puckett will make a report on the transfer at the retirement board's February meeting, Ready said, telling members "how it happened; how it has been fixed."

City Council President Scott Kincaid said he's been told by auditors that about \$20 million intended for the retirement system actually built up in city coffers.

"If in fact the city hasn't been contributing like it should have, they are making the investments instead of the retirement board," said Kincaid. "The pension system needs to be made completely whole."

The council president said he wants an accounting of how much interest the money could have earned if invested by the retirement system rather than the certificates of deposit used by the city.

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He may be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 2, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### RETIREMENT PANEL URGES 'IMMEDIATE' AUDIT OF PLAN

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The city retirement system's books have not been separately audited for at least three calendar years, and some members of Flint's Retirement Board are blaming Finance Director **Marc Puckett**.

Puckett, the Retirement Board secretary, last week announced that his staff failed to transfer pension funds into a money market retirement system account for about six months.

On Monday, Puckett said the pooled cash fund where the pension funds were mistakenly kept peaked at about \$17 million - \$8 million more than City Administrator David H. Ready acknowledged last week.

In December, transfers to the proper account restarted, Puckett said, and a final deposit, including interest earned, is expected to be made Wednesday.

Several Retirement Board members said the incident highlights the need for an immediate independent audit of the retirement system, which has assets of more than \$800 million.

"It's been far too long. We need to push that forward," said Hugh Rose, vice chairman of the board. "These issues push the need for that even more."

Puckett said he's worked with Arthur Andersen, a Detroit auditing company, to produce a stand-alone audit separate from the citywide audit by Dupuis & Ryden, a Flint accounting firm.

But several factors, including disagreements about terms of the audit, have

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slowed the process. The retirement board agreed to the audit in 1997.

While Dupuis & Ryden reviews all city of Flint accounts in filing its annual audit, some Retirement Board members said they'll feel more comfortable after a more concentrated review.

Arthur Andersen officials could not be reached for comment Monday, but Donald Phillips, a city retiree who represents United Retired Governmental Employees Local 1, said "the problem is they can't get the figures" from Puckett's department.

"We can preach and preach and preach ... (but) our hands are tied," said Phillips.

Although members have debated whether the stand-alone audit is necessary, Ready said Monday he has "directed the Finance Department to make that happen ASAP."

Puckett said the pension transfers have been misunderstood since news about them broke last week. He insisted Monday that the two accounts in question are both retirement system accounts.

"These funds have always been in the retirement (system)," said Puckett.

Mark Smith, a police lieutenant and retirement board member, said he's troubled by what he's heard in the past two weeks.

"I'm definitely concerned," he said about the failure to transfer the money. "The question is, was it just a snafu or was it deliberate?"

Puckett is expected to make a report on the transfer trouble at the Retirement Board's Feb. 23 meeting. The board meets monthly to oversee Flint's retirement system.

City Council President Scott Kincaid, who is circulating petitions to run for mayor, said the stand-alone audit should be performed.

"An audit is just a check and balance of the system. ... Under Woodrow Stanley (there has been) resistance to having audits done," Kincaid said.

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He may be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 3, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FINAL **Page:** D1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### FINANCE DIRECTOR RESIGNS UNDER FIRE OF PENSION FLAP

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Finance Director **Marc Puckett**, under fire for failing to make routine pension transfers since 1997, has given his resignation notice to Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley.

Puckett, the city's finance director since 1992, said this morning he has not been asked to leave his position and is considering a job offer he received in December.

Puckett said he would address the City Council in a committee meeting today and called the pension controversy "contrived because someone is running for mayor."

On Monday, in a letter to 6th Ward City Councilman Mark Horrigan, Puckett stressed that "all monies in question ... have always been on deposit in the retirement fund."

But Puckett said deposits - made up of employer and employee contributions - have not been transferred as they should have been for more than two years. The money was supposed to have been transferred from a cash fund into a money market retirement system account.

The fact that the transfers were not made was noted after Flint's 1997 financial audit and again during the 1998 audit, which is not yet complete.

"Unfortunately, I failed to follow up to ensure that these work assignments were completed, and for that I accept full responsibility," Puckett said in his

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letter to Horrigan, the council's Finance Committee chairman.

City Administrator David H. Ready confirmed the resignation and said Budget Director Matthew Grady will take over Puckett's supervisory responsibilities on an interim basis. Grady has a reputation in City Hall for trustworthiness, and he has shown an ability to work with members of the City Council.

That same ability with a diverse council didn't always come easily to Puckett, who clashed routinely with former members such as Jack D. Minore and John Northrup.

On Tuesday, Council President Scott Kincaid declined comment on the resignation.

Ready said Puckett has accepted a governmental position elsewhere and deserves credit for his financial work here, particularly in Stanley's first term. The director has been credited with helping to make up a multimillion-dollar deficit by charging various accounts for things the general fund had paid for previously.

"Marc has decided to pursue other opportunities," Ready said.

Stanley named Puckett finance director in 1992, after Puckett was dismissed from his position in Eastpointe, a Macomb County city where the finance director serves at the pleasure of the council rather than the mayor.

He was selected from about 100 applicants for the job, but had recently caused headaches and bad publicity for the administration because of his department's failure to make the pension transfers.

Already, members of the city Retirement Board have renewed serious discussions about appointing an independent administrator - someone other than the city finance director - to oversee the \$800-million pension system.

A native of Genesee County, Puckett grew up in Flint and Grand Blanc. He received a bachelor's degree from Ferris State University and had previously worked for the cities of Albion and Pleasant Ridge.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 3, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** D2

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### RETIREMENT BOARD SPLITS OVER NEED FOR INDEPENDENT MANAGER

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Days after revelations that a city employee failed to transfer pension funds properly, members of the city's Retirement Board are renewing calls for an independent manager to oversee Flint's \$800-million pension system.

Already, a power struggle is shaping up, with employee and retiree representatives on one side and those loyal to Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley on the other.

Advocates of an independent administrator said they are tired of delays, some of which they attribute to what they call foot-dragging by Finance Director **Marc Puckett**.

Puckett, who is resigning from his city post, is also the secretary of the Retirement Board. In addition to the delays in transfers, Puckett confirmed this week that the last three years of retirement system accounts have not been subject to a stand-alone audit.

On Tuesday, an investigator with the state Department of Treasury's Bureau of Local Government came to Flint to investigate complaints about the tardy fund transfers.

"We just can't continue to have it (this way)," said police Lt. Mark Smith, a Retirement Board member.

Smith and Hugh Rose, vice chairman of the board, said there may be enough votes to approve the hiring of an independent administrator

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because of the recent problems.

A Retirement Board committee headed by Rose has been studying whether an administrator should be hired and collecting information from Michigan communities that have such a structure.

"Whether it's an independent administrator (or not), we need to invest some more resources in (the system)," Rose said.

Board member Donald Phillips, who represents Flint retirees, is a longtime advocate of the move. This week, City Council President Scott Kincaid said he backs the change as well.

"The city of Flint really needs its own retirement administrator," said Kincaid, who is circulating petitions to oppose Stanley for mayor this year. " (Retirees) really can't rely on the city finance director. ... This clearly shows a reason why the pension board ought to have its own administrator."

The debate over hiring a pension administrator dates back to at least the administration of former Mayor James A. Sharp Jr., when board members complained that retirement services were being controlled too closely by then- Finance Director John Corbliss.

Former Mayor Matthew S. Collier, who succeeded Sharp, also fought the effort to hire an outside administrator, maintaining the board did not need its own full-time official.

City Administrator David H. Ready, who chairs the Retirement Board, continued to suggest as much this week.

Adding a new administrator would take hundreds of thousands of dollars away from investments designed to benefit city retirees, he said.

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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**Edition:** FINAL **Page:** D1

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 10, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C2

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### FORMER FINANCE DIRECTOR LASHES BACK AT CRITICS, HINTS SUIT

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The city's former finance director, under fire for a delay in transferring money to a Flint pension fund, responded sharply to critics Tuesday, threatening to take legal action over some of their accusations against him.

**Marc Puckett**, who resigned Friday, said the controversy amounts to nothing more than an "election-year attempt to try to get the mayor (Woodrow Stanley)."

In a telephone interview with The Flint Journal, Puckett said no harm has been done to the city because of the delay in transferring millions of dollars between pension funds. He also denied any insinuations that the delay was intentional, and said he has hired an attorney to represent him in the matter.

"People ran off with a shard of information and turned it into something different," Puckett said.

"... I've been libeled, I've been slandered and I'm not going to put up with that."

Puckett's comments came after some Flint Retirement Board members said Tuesday they don't believe what they've heard from Puckett about the matter. The board also agreed to start its own investigation into the city's failure to make timely transfers.

Fifth Ward City Councilman Barry Williams, who generally has supported Mayor Woodrow Stanley's agenda, said Puckett was misleading in

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discussing the pension problems before leaving his job.

"The person wasn't telling us the truth," said Williams, an alternate City Council representative on the Retirement Board. "There's no sense in uttering (again) what he's said."

In response to the allegations, Puckett said some of the board members did not understand the financial issues involved.

"Unfortunately, when you're dealing with board members, ... a lot of these people are without any financial backgrounds," he said.

City Administrator David H. Ready answered board questions about the pension problem with extreme caution, noting with each answer that information he's relied upon came from Puckett and had not been verified independently.

A preliminary review by the Michigan Department of Treasury has concluded that while the city made employee and employer contributions to the pension system for two years, it failed to make transfers to the proper account within the retirement fund.

The state's investigation is continuing, said Penny Griffin, a spokeswoman for the department.

On Tuesday, Ready appointed Hugh Rose, vice chairman of the Retirement Board, to head a four-person committee and charged the group with reviewing transfer failures.

"If you say something else needs to be done, that's what we'll do," Ready said. "Whatever it takes to resolve this, it will be done."

Flint's Retirement Board oversees an \$860-million pension system.

Puckett, finance director since 1992, originally told the Retirement Board that about \$9 million had not been transferred to the proper pension account, Ready said. But Flint Treasurer Jim Goodwin said the total was up to \$21 million at one point.

In a three-page letter to 6th Ward City Councilman Mark Horrigan, Puckett stressed that "all monies in question ... have always been on deposit in the retirement fund."

On Tuesday, he said the money had simply not been transferred from one retirement fund to another.

Puckett had blamed an internal auditor in his department for failing to make the proper transfer and himself for failing to catch the error.

In a letter to Ready Friday, Guy F. Baumgart, grievance committee chairman for AFSCME Local 1600, said he was "appalled to hear where blame was being laid for this incident."

Baumgart's letter said the employee blamed for failing to make the transfer "was never trained in this area because they are not authorized to do transfers to the pension fund."

"Yes, our members are not perfect, and yes, we all make mistakes," the letter continued, "but when something like this occurs, and our members get the blame for things way beyond their control, it is time for someone to step up to the plate and say, 'The buck stops here.' "

But Puckett continued to say Tuesday that the problem arose because of a

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failure by a department employee.

"This was not a problem I created. I brought it up, I explained what occurred," he said.

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317. 30

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 24, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### FLINT TO BOOST PENSION FUND CITY TO ADD \$1.1 MILLION

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The city will deposit an additional \$1.1 million into its retirement system today - the minimum amount of interest officials say is owed to the fund because of past failures to transfer money to the proper pension accounts.

City Administrator David Ready said today's transfer comes on top of \$21 million in employee and employer contributions transferred since December when former Finance Department Director **Marc Puckett** reported the transactions had not been made for two years.

Puckett resigned abruptly from his position this month but has said the failure to make the transfers, despite warnings from auditors, was unintentional.

Members of the city Retirement Board continue to sort out how much the pension system is due because of lost interest income. Ready said, however, the \$1.1 million represents an estimate by auditors of the interest earned on the \$21 million while it was in the improper account.

Hugh Rose, vice chairman of the Retirement Board, said Tuesday that more money will be due the retirement system because of Puckett's failure to see that the pension money was invested properly.

"I think what it would have earned is greater than that (\$1.1 million)," Rose said during the board's meeting Tuesday.

The board oversees an \$860-million pension system.

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A preliminary review of the matter by the Michigan Department of Treasury has concluded that while the city made employee and employer pension contributions for the two years in question, it failed to make transfers to the proper account within the retirement fund. The state's investigation remains open.

Puckett has called the pension controversy an "election-year attempt to try to get the mayor (Woodrow Stanley)."

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

March 19, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** MAIN

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** A1

**Section:** MAIN

### FLINT SENT TAX FUNDS TO WRONG UNITS

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Auditors and Flint officials believe the city misdirected some property tax payments for several years, potentially making more than \$1 million in incorrect payments to entities including the Flint School District.

A study of the distribution problem by city officials and the auditing firm Dupuis & Ryden, while incomplete, has the potential to affect the finances of the city, the Flint School District, Bishop Airport and other agencies that collect a millage from city residents.

Top aides to Mayor Woodrow Stanley confirmed Thursday that the problem dates back at least to the 1996 tax roll. They said they have been working with state officials to resolve it.

Peggy Jury, a representative of Dupuis & Ryden, said a final calculation to determine which entities are due money and which have been overpaid has not been completed.

She said the problem could amount to more than \$1 million.

Stanley aides would not speculate about how much money may have been distributed incorrectly. But both City Administrator David H. Ready and Budget Director Matthew Grady said the tax dollars will have to be redistributed.

"Some entities may owe and some may get," Ready said.

The problem involves money collected in areas that were exempt or partly exempt from paying certain millages.

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The amounts collected were correct, Jury said, but the disbursement of those taxes is at issue.

The confusion about distribution formulas was compounded, she said, by the settlement of a tax appeal by General Motors, by Proposal A and by the retirement of a longtime city assessor, she said.

Resolving the problem could lead to a roundtable meeting with entities that receive property tax payments - a meeting to "come up with a fair and equitable plan" to redistribute the property taxes, Grady said.

As of Thursday, the city had notified just one of the entities that they may be due a windfall or may have received too much of the tax pie.

Grady said the city wants to have a final balance sheet to present to those affected before making those contacts.

The property tax distribution problem is the second financial bombshell to hit city hall in a matter of days. Both raise new questions about the city's ability to distribute money.

Last week, Stanley was forced to order the transfer of nearly \$1 million from city coffers to the Flint pension system because of a failure to transfer employee and employer contributions.

The \$1 million represented uncollected interest - unrecoverable money - that the pension system lost because of the city's failure to make proper transfers.

Former city Finance Director **Marc Puckett** resigned abruptly after the failure to transfer became public and on Thursday, Grady said Stanley has ordered "a comprehensive review of practices in ... Marc's department."

The city's Finance Department, which Grady is heading on an interim basis, was responsible for the property tax distribution, Grady said.

When Stanley picked Puckett to lead the department in 1992, he chose him from some 100 applicants, saying he was "impressed with Marc's grasp of the finance discipline. ..."

City Council President Scott Kincaid declined to comment on the tax distribution, saying the details have yet to be fully uncovered.

"I just know there's a problem," Kincaid said. "The auditing firm is determining how big the problem is."

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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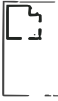
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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

March 26, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FINAL **Page:** C1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### EX-FINANCE DIRECTOR CASHES IN ON \$6,000 IN UNUSED VACATION TIME

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Former Finance Director **Marc Puckett** has received more than \$6,000 for unused vacation time through a special agreement he had with City Administrator David H. Ready.

That's in addition to \$10,000 Puckett already was entitled to as a department head for 320 hours of unused vacation time.

Puckett was a sometimes-controversial figure in Flint before resigning in February, leaving days after revealing that his department failed to make proper pension transfers for nearly two years despite warnings from auditors.

Since Puckett's departure, Mayor Woodrow Stanley has ordered a comprehensive review of practices in the finance department.

Flint department heads can be reimbursed for up to 320 hours of unused vacation when they leave their jobs.

Ready said Puckett was entitled to the additional 197 hours because he was asked not to use vacation time to which he was entitled. The city administrator said Puckett was needed as a new software system was introduced in City Hall and as Flint prepared for potential year 2000 computer problems.

Based on Puckett's hourly pay rate of \$31.76, the unused vacation time totals more than \$16,000.

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Ready said it is "very normal practice in business and government to buy up that vacation time."

Critics, who sometimes clashed with Puckett, disagreed.

City Council President Scott Kincaid, a potential candidate for mayor, said Puckett "should have been terminated, not rewarded."

The expenditure for the vacation time did not require council approval.

First Ward Councilman Omar A. Sims said the city must fulfill its obligation to Puckett, despite recent finance department problems, including a current audit over property tax payments that were misdirected to some local units of government.

"We need to honor the agreement," Sims said.

Ron Fonger writes about Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

March 30, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** MAIN

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** A1

**Section:** MAIN

### FLINT COULD OWE STATE MILLIONS SOME INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES TAXES HAVE NOT BEEN PAID SINCE 1996

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Flint likely owes the state of Michigan millions of dollars in industrial facility taxes that haven't been paid since 1996, a state treasury official

said. It's the latest bombshell to land in the city's troubled Finance Department and comes on the heels of a Flint Journal report earlier this month that the city may have made more than \$1 million in incorrect property tax payments to local entities, such as the Flint School District.

Budget Director Matthew Grady said the industrial facility tax payments - money collected from companies granted tax abatements - have remained unspent in a city account. Thus, Flint "shouldn't have to approve dollars out of the general fund" to pay off the debt, Grady said.

Industrial facility taxes are paid by companies in place of property taxes, said Mark Hilpert, director of the state Department of Treasury's Bureau of Local Government.

Flint and the state granted 50 separate abatements still in effect in the city, but state officials said none of the industrial facility taxes from those abatements has been forwarded to the state.

"We know they owe. We just don't know how much yet," said Hilpert, who estimated the three-year total is likely millions of dollars.

The examination of Flint's payments is part of a statewide review by the

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treasury department over cities' track records in paying the taxes.

Grady confirmed Monday, "The information coming from the state is correct," but he said the city has no final estimate of how much the state is due.

The state's claim against Flint is part of a wider tax distribution probe local auditors continue to investigate.

Earlier this month, auditors and Flint officials said the city misdirected some property taxes for several years, making more than \$1 million in incorrect payments to local units.

Part of the tax distribution problems also involved the city's collection of the industrial facility taxes.

Grady said it could be June before a final accounting shows which entities are due money and which were overpaid.

The budget director, who is also serving as interim finance director, said he wants to have a final accounting of the tax distribution problems before presenting a plan to the affected entities.

"This stems back a couple of years ago," said Grady. "It hasn't been done. It should have been done."

City Administrator David Ready said former Finance Director **Marc Puckett** disagreed with state officials on how much the city owed the state for industrial and commercial facilities taxes in the past.

In 1996, auditors from Dupuis & Ryden determined the city had not paid \$12 million in the taxes for four fiscal years. That payment was later made.

"Marc was of the impression we had overpaid them (or had the potential to overpay them)," Ready said. "That threw a monkey wrench into the works."

Grady replaced Puckett, who resigned in the midst of an investigation over the failure to transfer employee and employer pension contributions to the proper account.

Flint Mayor Woodrow Stanley was forced to order the transfer of nearly \$1 million in taxpayer funds to the Flint pension system to make up for uncollected interest that the pension system lost because of the city's failure to make proper transfers.

The city's Finance Department was responsible for both the pension transfers and the property tax distribution, city officials have said.

Since Puckett's resignation, Stanley has ordered "a comprehensive review of practices in ... Marc's department."

City Council President Scott Kincaid, a declared candidate for mayor, said Monday that he will withhold comment until an audit by the auditing firm Dupuis & Ryden is complete.

Kincaid said he believes \$2 million to \$4 million may have been distributed incorrectly by the city since the 1996 tax roll.

Two rocky months

Jan. 30: Finance director **Marc Puckett** tells the city Retirement Board that he has discovered a failure to transfer money that belonged in a pension system account. The city later acknowledges that the failure to transfer went

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

April 8, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LINER

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C5

**Section:** LINER

### STANLEY ACTS ON MONEY WOES, APPOINTS NEW FINANCE CHIEF

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Mayor Woodrow Stanley, faced with stubborn financial problems, Wednesday appointed Matthew Grady III as the chief of his Finance Department, part of a new fiscal plan to resolve lingering woes.

The plan comes as city auditors push to complete an annual audit that is more than three months late to the state of Michigan, a situation that has impaired the city's ability to borrow money.

Stanley's plan includes:

The permanent appointment of Grady, who has been praised by the administration, auditors and City Council members since he took over the department on an interim basis two months ago.

Stanley said he will begin a search immediately to replace Grady as budget director.

Creation of a three- to five-member blue ribbon review committee composed of "financial experts to review city financial policies."

The committee will be asked to review some of the most pressing financial questions facing the city. Among them: reconciling Flint's incorrect distribution of some property taxes to other local entities dating to the 1996 tax roll and resolving a question of how much the city owes the state in industrial facility taxes for the past three years.

Retaining accounting firm Arthur Andersen to provide financial consulting

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and assistance to the finance department during "this period of review and transition."

A recommendation to the Flint Retirement Board that it hire an independent retirement fund administrator, a move the administration had resisted for several years.

Before the February resignation of former Finance Director **Marc Puckett**, an internal investigation found that the department failed to transfer more than \$20 million in employee and employer contributions to the city's pension system on a timely basis.

The mistake ultimately cost city taxpayers nearly \$1 million, the cost of replacing interest that should have been earned on the money.

"This should send a clear signal that we are fully on top of (these issues)," Stanley said.

"It should help to put a number of these issues behind us."

The mayor called the financial program "my personal pledge to establish adequate mechanisms to prevent similar incidences from occurring in the future."

Stanley said he was "disappointed with how the former finance director handled some matters," naming the pension transfer in particular.

But he did not criticize Puckett, who had been a department head since 1992, for property tax problems that have helped to delay this year's audit.

A number of issues, including Proposal A - the property tax-cutting measure passed by Michigan voters in 1994 - and the settlement of a General Motors property tax appeal, contributed to those problems, he said.

City Councilman Mark Horrigan of the 6th Ward, chairman of the council's Finance Committee, said he is encouraged by what he heard.

"They all sound like very good ideas," said Horrigan, "but we should have never gotten in this position."

Ron Fonger covers Flint city government and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

April 11, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** OPINION

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** H2

**Section:** OPINION

### STANLEY MUST SHARE BLAME AS PART OF HIS PLAN TO FIX CITY'S FINANCIAL WOES

By OUR VIEWS

Call it election-year politics, or bad timing for Mayor Woodrow Stanley, or just the fruits of bad management. Whatever the reason for the rash of financial irregularities that have plagued the city of Flint recently, the fact remains that something must be done to safeguard public dollars are restore the public's confidence.

In doing so, there also must be preventative action taken to make sure such "errors" don't happen again.

Just this year, The Journal has uncovered a laundry list of events and circumstances that have shaken the public's confidence in city government, or at least questioned Stanley's judgment when it comes to government appointments. But more importantly they have caused great speculation of an even bleaker financial picture than what the surface reveals.

In February the city was forced to put \$1.1 million in its pension system to cover the amount of interest that would have been generated on more than \$20 million in employee contributions had the money not sat in the wrong account for more than a year.

Last month city officials announced that they might have misdirected \$1 million in property tax payments to local entities.

Then the state treasury's office accused the city of failing to forward industrial facility taxes that it collected for tax abatement areas during the past three years.

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The state later came down on the city for being more than three months late with its annual audit of city finances, possibly impairing the city's ability to borrow money.

In response to these problems, Stanley on Wednesday outlined his remedy.

Appointment of Matthew Grady III as director of the city's Finance Department.

The creation of a three- to five-member review committee made up of financial experts who will review city financial policies.

Hiring accounting firm Arthur Andersen to provide consulting to the finance department.

Recommending the Flint Retirement Board hire an independent retirement fund administrator.

All four moves make good sense, and should help prevent future mishaps.

But concerns and questions still loom. How did the city get to this point financially? Are these problems a sign of an even bigger problem yet to be revealed?

Stanley was quick to cite his disappointment in former Finance Director **Marc Puckett**, who resign after seven years as the city's finance chief just as these events began to unravel. Whether Puckett is to blame for all of these irregularities remains to be discovered. But wherever fault lies it must be shared by Stanley.

As mayor he is responsible for appointing people with the credentials and ability to handle enormous tasks. Should something go astray in any department his appointees head, it reflects negatively on the city and its leadership.

Hopefully Stanley's Four Point Fiscal Integrity Plan will rectify the current situation and help avoid future turmoil.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

September 9, 1999

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C2

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### AUDIT DETAILS SHORTFALLS IN FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

By Ron Fonger JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Auditors are suggesting there are not enough workers in the city's Finance Department to keep financial records properly maintained.

In a five-page report to Mayor Woodrow Stanley and the City Council, auditors Dupuis & Ryden said it found significant deficiencies in the city's internal controls over financial reporting.

Among the firm's findings:

The city apparently violated state law by spending beyond the budget adopted by the City Council in some areas.

A lack of employees in the city finance and budget departments has resulted in transactions not being recorded on the city's general ledger in a timely way, making it impossible to compare the city budget to its actual spending on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Procedures have not provided for an interim review of the general ledger account balances, resulting in errors not being detected until the annual audit.

During 1998, bank reconciliations for some accounts were not performed on a timely basis - some not prepared until seven months after the close of the year, including the main pooled cash checking and investment account, which had more than \$97 million in cash and investments.

Brian Ross of Dupuis & Ryden said some of the conditions have continued

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for years, but have risen to the level of "reportable conditions," which mean there are significant internal control deficiencies.

Council members, who have watched a series of financial calamities unfold inside city hall in 1999, said they hope the audit report, covering the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1998, signals an end to the fiscal problems.

"Since I have been here, all I've heard is what a mess the city's finances are," said 3rd Ward Councilman Johnnie Coleman. "I don't want to see this another year."

Top Stanley officials said the report to the City Council on Wednesday produced little new information and said most issues identified in the audit letter have been or are being addressed.

"I am glad to see it ... I want to say, 'This is what's happened. What are we going to do about that? How do I keep that from happening again?' " said Finance Director Matthew Grady.

Council members have been supportive of Grady since Stanley appointed the former budget director to replace **Marc Puckett**, who resigned as the mayor's finance director after revealing the city's failure to properly transfer \$19 million to its pension fund over two years.

That mistake alone cost Flint taxpayers nearly \$1 million as lost interest was paid back to retirees with money that could have been used for street sweeping, police protection or other services.

Flint officials also acknowledged this year they had incorrectly distributed some \$6 million in tax dollars collected for city schools, Bishop Airport and other Genesee County entities - a problem that has yet to be fully resolved.

And the city and state continue to discuss Flint's failure to pay industrial and commercial facility taxes since 1996.

The financial difficulties led Stanley to roll out a four-point fiscal integrity plan designed to restore confidence in Flint's ability to manage money.

One piece of that plan was Grady's appointment. The new finance director said he is taking a different approach to dealing with problems he inherited, including involving more of his staff in discussions of problems and increasing the responsibility of division heads.

In previous years, he said, Puckett often didn't share information as freely.

City Administrator David H. Ready said some key accounting positions remain vacant in the city despite efforts to fill them. Staffing shortages are getting more manageable, he said, as the city institutes new accounting software.

Ron Fonger covers government in Flint and Genesee County, and Bishop Airport. He can be reached at (810) 766-6317.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

September 1, 2000

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** MAIN

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** A1

**Section:** MAIN

### OFFICIALS WALK AWAY, GET PAYOUTS COUNCIL QUESTIONS SEVERANCE PACKAGES

By Christofer Machniak JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Two City Council members are raising questions over severance packages that exceeded more than \$50,000 each for two top officials who left in July.

But city officials say they were only following a precedent the council set in 1997 that allowed a former city clerk to collect more than \$78,000.

The questions center on how much unused vacation and sick time officials can receive when they leave the city.

The maximum normally observed for unused vacation time is 320 hours, but both David H. Ready, former city administrator, and Reginald Richardson, former housing commission director, signed agreements allowing them to collect more.

Sixth Ward City Councilman Mark A. Horrigan asked the administration on Monday to explain the policy at a future meeting. He said appointed officials are salaried and shouldn't receive payments for unused sick and vacation time.

Ready, who began work as city manager of Palm Springs, Calif., in June after more than eight years in Flint, was paid for about 434 hours of unused vacation time and 480 hours of unused sick time, totaling more than \$40,000. His hourly rate was \$38.27.

He also used 320 hours of additional vacation from the time he left the city on June 6 until he officially resigned July 28, which allowed him to accrue

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additional vacation and sick time and earn more retirement benefits.

Richardson, who retired in July in the wake of two sexual harassment lawsuits against him, was paid for 918.5 hours in unused vacation time, totaling more than \$31,000. His hourly rate was \$34.49. With vacation and retirement benefits, his effective payout topped \$50,000.

One lawsuit, involving Swanzetta Wilson, has been settled in which the city paid \$4,000. The other, involving Deborah Pellens, is set for trial in September. The city and housing commission no longer are defendants in that case.

City officials say there is a precedent for the payments to Ready and Richardson. Louis Hawkins, former city clerk, was paid for more than 1,600 hours of vacation time when he left in 1997.

Hawkins was paid for 712 hours for time he was allowed to accrue, the maximum for employees who started before 1978. In addition, the council got Hawkins an additional 963 hours because it asked Hawkins to forgo vacation to perform work.

The hours added up to more than \$78,000.

"I just want them to look at the facts before casting stones and casting doubts," said Tony Morolla, the city's personnel and labor relations director.

Ready, reached by telephone in California, said he took less than two weeks of vacation yearly because of city problems, ranging from water billing and new computer software to a brain drain caused by early retirements.

"There were so many hours I couldn't take," Ready said. "The workload did not, would not permit me to be gone, out of the office a month out of the year."

Ninth Ward Councilman Scott Kincaid said he doesn't want to deny any benefit due a city employee, but he wonders if the city can accurately monitor if top officials legitimately use vacation and sick time.

Kincaid also raised questions this year after James Makokha, former governmental policy director, was paid in February for 480 hours of sick time totaling more than \$18,000.

Makokha hadn't worked since September 1997 in connection with a bribery-related scandal, and he eventually pleaded guilty, but he remained on the payroll until Dec. 31, 1999.

Questions also were asked shortly after Marc **Puckett**, former finance director, resigned in February 1999. **Puckett**, who left after it was revealed his department failed to make pension transfers for almost two years despite warnings from auditors, was paid an additional \$6,000 for unused vacation time.

Some city employees criticized the payments, especially in the wake of \$11.6 million in budget cuts that included about 100 layoffs.

"I don't think it's right for people to get laid off, but the administration is granting special agreements for appointed officials," said one employee who asked not to be named for fear of retribution.

Christofer Machniak can be reached at (810) 766-6304 or [cmachniak@flintjournal.com](mailto:cmachniak@flintjournal.com).

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

August 15, 2001

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** TEMPO

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** B1

**Section:** TEMPO

### City chaos makes good copy

By Andrew Heller

I returned from vacation to numerous questions that popped up while I was away about whether I was thrilled with the attempt to recall the mayor.

Let me answer collectively: Are you nuts? This guy is black gold, copy-wise. Texas tea. And I'm Jed Clampett. Sure, the city needs a change in leadership. Sure, Flint's a mess and getting worse by the minute. And, sure, the Woodman simply hasn't done the job. But recall him? Hello? Leaders like this don't exactly grow on trees, people.

I'm being purely selfish, of course, but it would be just my rotten luck if the recall were to succeed. Woodrow suddenly would have to find some other way to print money without doing a whole lot. (I recommend columnizing.) And there I'd be without my ace in the hole, my fallback plan, my when-all-else-fails man.

For instance, when I return from vacation it's difficult to write because it takes a few days to work up a healthy anger about anything. So what happened Sunday night as I read through the week of Journals I had missed? "Flint fire offenses to cost \$151,200."

Oh, sweet mama, I love this man.

The fines, it turns out, are the biggest ever levied by the state against a fire department in Michigan and nearly twice as large as the previous record fine for safety violations. (So if we're ever searching for something to put on welcome signs at the city limit. ...)

According to my favorite newspaper, the state has conducted 1,053

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inspections of fire departments since 1989, and in all that time it has found only eight "willful" violations of Michigan OSHA standards. Wanna guess how many the Flint Fire Department had in this one inspection? Three. That's huge. That's like the Detroit Tigers beating someone 94-3. We rule!

And the funniest thing is that several of the violations were for - get this - not having functioning smoke detectors in several fire stations. No smoke detectors! That's like a jail not having locks on the cells. Like a ... well, it's like a fire station ... not having freaking smoke detectors!

In all, the state found 90 safety violations. As the City Council's Scott Kincaid put it: "It's absolutely ridiculous that the fire department has that much disregard for firefighters' safety."

The problem, it seems, is that no one instituted the sort of routine safety and maintenance programs that just about every other business has had in place for years.

That would seem to bespeak a lack of quality leadership. And guess who appointed the fire chief under whose watch all this happened (or didn't happen, as the case may be)?

That's right. Your fearless leader, the Woodman.

It's a bit early to blame the fire chief alone, but if the buck in his department stops with him, then what we have here is another example of the mayor's inability to pick quality people for crucial jobs.

Let's see, there was James Makokha, the former director of governmental policy who was convicted of bribery charges. Then there was Steven Waller, the former director of parks and recreation, who was convicted of attempted embezzling. And of course, who could forget **Marc Puckett**, the former finance director who resigned after costing the city a million dollars for screwing up pension funds?

Recall? You don't recall a mayor who brought you all that AND leads the city into financial ruin AND acts as if he's God's gift to North America. Not from my perspective, anyway.

You give him a lifetime contract.

To contact Andrew Heller, call (810) 766-6116, fax (810) 767-2278 or e-mail [aheller@flintjournal.com](mailto:aheller@flintjournal.com). For Heller columns online, visit [fl.mlive.com/columns](http://fl.mlive.com/columns).

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

February 23, 2002

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** A4

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### City's finance department: Better or worse?

By JOURNAL STAFF WRITER Christofer Machniak

Third in a series that resumes Wednesday.

Flint - During his State of the City speech this month, Mayor Woodrow Stanley hailed how the city completed its annual audit four months earlier than last year to show progress in reforming the troubled Finance Department.

But backers of the March 5 recall election like to point out the 2000-01 audit was still 30 days late.

Failing to provide financial records and account data for a timely 2000 audit is the third reason Citizens United for Better Government cites for ousting Stanley. "If an administration has 10 years of experience and has the temerity to brag about a failure ... then this administration is demonstrating it's an incompetent administration," said Sid Edwards, a spokesman for Citizens United.

But city officials said getting the audit sooner illustrates a Finance Department on the rebound. Following the start of a City Council investigation into the department last summer, Stanley assembled a task force of community and business leaders that recommended an overhaul, including a new finance director and nine workers.

Only half of the workers have been hired and the mayor's nominee for finance director still needs council approval. But enough progress has been made that extremely late audits should be a thing of the past, said City Administrator Darnell Earley.

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Earley said removing Stanley now will only jeopardize the progress made in fixing the department.

"We've certainly turned that corner," Earley said. "The reforms that we've put in place are giving us now a much more pro-active posture."

But recall proponents said voters shouldn't forget the past, in which the city has been late with audits for the past five years. The resulting inability to provide timely and accurate financial numbers slowed decisions in responding to the \$28.4-million debt.

The department's difficulties began with a brain drain in the finance office following an early retirement program in the mid-1990s. Council members also charge the department experienced a lot of transfers in and out, blaming poor management skills on former Finance Director **Marc Puckett**.

The loss of talent, combined with problems associated with the Y2K conversion and making the city's new computer systems work together, overwhelmed the department when Matthew A. Grady came to the position in early 1999.

Grady, who had been budget director, took over from Puckett, left his job under a cloud in the wake of the discovery that he failed to transfer about \$20 million to the pension system, which cost the city about \$1 million in interest.

Problems with productivity, , skills levels and accountability led the city to bring in financial consultant Arthur Andersen to provide management advice. The lack of available trained staffing led the city to pay auditor BKR DuPuis & Ryden to perform some of the work.

"When I first got down to the Finance Department, we were fighting for our life, you know, that's the only way I can describe it," Grady said during testimony given during a council hearing in September on the problems.

But Grady also testified that his department made significant progress in many areas, including resolving a \$21-million property tax problem with the state and problems the city had in improperly distributing tax money to other entities.

Despite the progress, the city still couldn't provide the council with the information it wanted, which led to spending the council never approved. In addition, the information gap led to credibility problems that have kept the mayor and council mostly at odds over the past two years.

Earley said council confirmation of the new finance director, Peter Dobrzeniecki, will go a long way to sustain reforms.

But Edwards said the Dobrzeniecki decision is just another example of Stanley's poor choice of appointees. Dobrzeniecki's contract as finance director for the city of Eastpointe was not renewed in 2001 by a 4-1 City Council vote. Ten years ago, Puckett lost the same job in Eastpointe, by the same vote.

City officials say both votes were politically based, but Edwards finds the decision to get someone who lost his job from the same city too typical.

"The leadership in the Finance Department is sorely lacking," Edwards said. "I don't think the Detroit environs is the only area to produce such people because the ones they've sent haven't performed to what I expect."

Christofer Machniak covers Flint city government. He can be reached at (810) 766-6304 or [cmachniak@flintjournal.com](mailto:cmachniak@flintjournal.com).

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

January 3, 1998

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C2

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### METRO REPORT

Flint: Two honors go to finance director

Finance Director Marc R. **Puckett** and Flint's financial report have been recognized with a certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting. The award, given for five consecutive years, is from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. **Puckett** is primarily responsible for the city's annual report. The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association. The award is the second late-year honor for **Puckett**, who also was appointed to the Michigan Municipal Finance Officers Association Board of Directors.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

July 1, 1995

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C2

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### 'POLITICS' CLAIMED IN CITY'S NONPAYMENT OF BILL

By Linda Angelo JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Richard Dicks claims the city of Flint is refusing to pay him for consulting services he provided the Flint Ombudsman Office because he is supporting mayoral candidate Don Williamson.

City Finance Director **Marc Puckett** said the allegations are untrue.

According to a letter Dicks sent **Puckett**, Dicks said four councilmen - Johnnie Tucker, Verdell Duncan, Edward Taylor and Matt Taylor - told Ombudsman Darryl Buchanan in May that he should not contract any services with Dicks because he may give Williamson information from the Ombudsman's Office.

In the past, the Ombudsman's Office has not engaged in any political activity.

In June, Dicks submitted a request for payment to the Ombudsman Office and was not paid.

He claims a mayoral appointee told Buchanan that anybody who is not supporting Mayor Woodrow Stanley will not get paid. He said he also was informed a new policy required the mayor's approval and signature on professional service agreements.

"It's a sad day in the city of Flint when a legal contract is refused payment because an African-American supports a white candidate," Dicks wrote in the letter.

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**Puckett** said Dicks has submitted five payment requests and has been paid \$6,725. A payment request has not been processed since April, said **Puckett**.

He said the Finance Office requires that all professional service agreements be signed by the mayor and city clerk.

**Puckett** called Dicks' letter misleading, especially since it included a professional service agreement dated Oct. 18, 1994.

**Puckett** said each professional service agreement is valid for a maximum of \$2,000 and Dicks received payment for that invoice. He estimates Dicks still may be owed \$1,300.

"I'm outraged Mr. Dicks would claim we're withholding payment because he's an African-American supporting a white candidate," **Puckett** said.

"I'm upset Darryl is bringing other people into his problems. That has to be resolved between himself and City Council."

The City Council put Buchanan on administrative leave with pay while it investigates allegations from two ombudsman office employees that Buchanan harassed them. Buchanan is suing the city and council over the matter.

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

April 3, 1996

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** MAIN

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** A1

**Section:** MAIN

### FOLKS SOAKED BY WATER BILLS MAY GET RELIEF

By Linda Angelo JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Richard G. Crabe couldn't believe it when he reached into his mailbox and found a \$2,864.98 water bill.

"I could import water cheaper from Switzerland," said Crabe, 54, a Flint resident who lives alone.

Crabe said his bills have skyrocketed since fall. February's bill was \$1,500.

He said there's no way he could have flushed the toilet, washed clothes or taken enough showers to boost his bill an additional \$1,300 for March.

He insists his house does not have a leak, but it has not been inspected recently. A leak would have to flood his house to run up a \$2,800 bill, he said.

"I had to laugh because it can't be for real," Crabe said. "There has to be something really wrong, but I don't want to be the one to pay for the major mistake."

A new Flint water complaint board will start listening to wacky cases, like Crabe's high water bill, possibly by July. The board will consist of three residents and four staff members, said City Administrator David H. Ready.

The City Council is expected to approve the appointments by the end of this month, along with \$5,000 in next year's fiscal budget for claims.

But before residents can appeal to the board, they must meet several

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requirements, including at least two consecutive, unexplainable high water bills; an inspection for leaks by a city employee and a licensed plumber; and going through an administrative appeal process.

Colette Timlick said she filed a complaint with the ombudsman's office after her water bill went from \$74 in June 1995 to more than \$700 in October. City records show she was billed for using 16 units of water in July, 80 units in August and 156 units in September.

"The city has a monopoly," said Timlick, who thinks the water board is a good idea. "You can't go anywhere else. You're stuck, and that's what angers people."

Timlick said a plumber has checked her property and didn't find leaks. She now owes \$890.50, city records indicate.

"I'm not an anxious person," she said. "I just prayed about it and left it in God's hands."

Crabe, who has lived in his home since 1953, said he began having problems after a new meter was placed outside his house a few years ago. He said he has had a few high water bills, but none near \$2,800.

Crabe said a city housing specialist offered to meet with him in February after he complained about his bill.

In the meantime, he said a city employee re-read his meter Feb. 27. Afterward, he received a notice stating he had to pay \$147.32 by March 14 or his water would be shut off.

Residents now must call the water department to have their meters read if they detect a problem. If they don't like the result, they can request an administrative review and hearing with the city's chief accountant.

Timlick said she was promised a hearing but never got one. Crabe said he was unaware that he needed to request a hearing.

Mishaps can happen when readings are estimated or if employees misread the meter.

But Finance Director **Marc Puckett** said there is a misconception that the water meters malfunction.

"With forced flow meters, it is impossible for the meter to advance at a rate of speed faster than the water flowing through it," he said.

Incorrect water bills could result from remote readers, which are installed on the outside of houses. They may become corroded or bumped, affecting the meter's reading.

**Puckett** said it's the residents' responsibility to check the remote.

But council President Scott Kincaid said the remotes are ineffective, and residents shouldn't have to pick up the tab if the devices don't provide an accurate reading.

Kincaid said the whole appeal process needs to be revamped, and he's glad a new complaint board will be looking at unusual cases.

"There's nothing in place that's working," Kincaid said. "I'm experiencing more complaints now than in the past 10 years I've been on council."

~~The city has a monopoly (on Water service). You can't go anywhere else,~~

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Updated: March 5, 2008

You're stuck, and that's what angers people.'-Colette Thomas

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

March 20, 1997

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C1

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

# A FLOOD OF COMPLAINTS COUNCIL, RESIDENTS QUESTION FLINT WATER BILLS

By Linda Angelo JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

John Oliver thought a mistake was made when he received his Flint water bill and noticed his previous month's payment had not been deducted.

But Oliver, 77, became suspicious after he talked to neighbors with the same problem.

"There are people on Genesee Street, Ridgeway, Parkway and Carpenter Road; it's really all over, it's really a mess," Oliver said. "The mailman told me he's delivering bills that were already past the due date."

The Flint City Council also is upset over the number of complaints about water bills the past two weeks.

"Something is drastically wrong," 3rd Ward Councilman Johnnie Tucker said at Wednesday's committee meetings. "I don't know what the problem is, if it's with the computers, but (residents) can't get any answers. People are on a fixed income, and they can't afford to pay their bills twice."

But Finance Director **Marc Puckett**, who oversees the collection process, disputed the council's charges that residents are being billed twice for the same usage.

"There are no double billings," he said. "Within each fiscal year we have to have only 12 billings. We have a game plan to address the billing issue, and it's working."

He added, however, that fewer customer service employees have caused

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some problems.

"We have several vacancies that exist in the Customer Service Center that are in the process of being filled," **Puckett** said. "That combined with a few women on maternity leave and previous computer problems has caused the meter readers to get behind and the (customer service employees) behind."

That answer did not sit well with Council President Scott Kincaid.

"There are serious problems, and the residents of Flint are suffering because of the lack of people to read meters," Kincaid said. "That's the administration's fault for not making sure there are enough people to provide the service."

"We appropriate money for your department, and it's your responsibility to make sure there's enough people to read the meters and do the billing."

Some council members said the vacancies are partly the result of the city's early retirement program, which began in 1994. Vacancies often occur in departments other than the ones from which employees retire because it leads to employees moving to other departments.

Fifth Ward Councilman Matt Taylor said he was not satisfied with **Puckett's** explanation of the problem. He said he received at least seven complaints on Tuesday.

"These people deserve an answer and don't want to hear bull, and I don't want to hear it," he said.

Oliver and many other residents have taken their complaints to the Ombudsman's Office.

Running on empty: Water complaint board positions remain unfilled, C4

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## Flint Journal, The (MI)

January 11, 1996

Flint Journal, The (MI) **Section:** LOCAL NEWS

**Edition:** FIRST **Page:** C3

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS

### RETIREMENT FIRM ACCUSES OFFICIAL OF FAVORITISM

By Linda Angelo JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

A retirement planning company, whose agent is a former Flint councilman, is accusing Flint Finance Director **Marc Puckett** of spreading false information about the company and preventing it from offering services to Flint employees.

Consolidated Financial Corp. has filed a \$2-million lawsuit against the city and **Puckett** in Genesee County Circuit Court.

The suit states CFC should be allowed to offer its services because the City Council approved the firm in February as a retirement plan provider.

The suit alleges **Puckett** deliberately refused to follow the council's resolution and has shown favoritism to the city's current retirement plan providers: International City Management Association and Equitable Life Assurance Society.

The suit also alleges CFC had to pay for expenses that the city paid for the other two providers.

**Puckett** said the issue has nothing to do with favoritism.

"The position I have taken is consistent with my duty of due care to the plan participants," he said.

Behind the scenes, people on both sides of the issue cite political motivation as the reason for the dispute.

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Some question whether **Puckett** is refusing to process paperwork for CFC because one of Mayor Woodrow Stanley's supporters works for one of the current firms.

Others say CFC's plan doesn't meet the city's requirements, but that Councilman John Northrup has pushed to hire the company anyway because its agent is Michael McManaman, a former councilman and his friend.

But Northrup said he has pursued the issue because **Puckett** has been turning away companies that may offer better services for employees.

According to the lawsuit, **Puckett** told McManaman in October 1993 that CFC could not provide services because Flint's payroll system was a "two-slot" system, and the city already had two providers.

It later was determined, however, that Flint's payroll system permits up to 10 different plan providers, the suit states.

After an outside attorney reviewed the issue and found no problems, the council approved CFC as a provider in February 1995, and the mayor signed the plan in May.

The suit states employees expressed interest in signing up with the company, but **Puckett** refused to approve the necessary paperwork.

Company officials claim **Puckett** spread false information about the company when he told employees they could not sign up because CFC was not an authorized plan provider.

Although the council approved CFC as a vendor, City Attorney Michael Joliat said the company cannot be hired until **Puckett**, who is the plan administrator, determines whether it meets the necessary requirements.

He said **Puckett** is concerned there may be a potential conflict of interest.

"They offer investment advice to city employees and they stand in a position where they can receive fees or commissions," Joliat said.

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Updated: March 5, 2008

Orange County Register (California)

August 31, 2009 Monday

## City puts finance chief on leave

**BYLINE:** By ELLYN PAK, The Orange County Register

**SECTION:** LOCAL; Pg. B

**LENGTH:** 151 words

**DATELINE:** COSTA MESA

**HIGHLIGHT:** Costa Mesa officials say the reason does not involve money wrongs.

Finance Director **Marc Puckett** has been placed on leave for reasons that cannot be disclosed, officials said.

City Manager Allan Roeder said Puckett, who has worked for Costa Mesa since 1999, was placed on leave about two weeks ago. He did not say whether Puckett was placed on paid leave or whether he is scheduled to return to his post.

"I think it's an important point for people to understand that the nature of the personnel matter that we're dealing with does not involve malfeasance in terms of finance or misuse of public funds or loss of public funds," Roeder said.

Colleen O'Donoghue, assistant finance director, and Bobby Young, budget and research officer, have stepped in to oversee the Finance Department.

As chief finance officer, Puckett was responsible for overseeing the department and helping prepare the budget.

Roeder said he could not discuss whether a criminal investigation is pending.

**LOAD-DATE:** August 31, 2009

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