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State auditors: Former Midland clerk-treasurer illegally spent public money

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State auditors say a former Midland clerk-treasurer "illegally expended" more than \$12,000 in public money.

The auditors' findings against Tami Wainscott have been turned over to the Clinton County prosecutor, said Kim Norris, auditor of state spokesperson, on Tuesday.

The findings allege Wainscott wrote two payroll advance checks to herself (\$900 total), wrote unauthorized checks to herself (\$10,929), and made gasoline purchases using an unauthorized gasoline credit card (\$574).

Wainscott resigned in March just prior to a special meeting of village council which was convened to address allegations against her from state auditors following their preliminary examination of Village financial records.

Her attorney, Clyde Bennett II, said Tuesday there is no admission of any criminal wrongdoing.

"I'm saying that if there was a shortage [of funds], it's not due to criminal wrongdoing. I believe it would be a mistake, neglect, as compared to an intentional wrongdoing," said the Cincinnati attorney.

Bennett added that if, after his investi-

gation and review of the auditor's report, he concludes the government of Midland is out a certain amount of money, "we're going to attempt to make them [the government] whole."

In addition to the three allegations of illegal expenditures, the audit contained 14 material citations.

Norris said 14 is a "very high number" of material citations - they are called material citations, she said, because they "could impact their [Village's] financial condition."

Midland Mayor Joyce Schaeffer said Tuesday, "We would ask her [Wainscott] how much money we had in the budget; she would give us a figure. And she [Wainscott] said, 'Well, I'm not sure how accurate this is. I haven't got the books all totaled up for the month.' Well, that was understandable because it was the middle of the month." Midland Village Council meets the second Tuesday of the month.

The mayor added, "We just trusted her. I guess that was our fault because we trusted her. We've known her ever since she was a teen-ager, and we all trusted her."

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According to the audit report, the 32-year-old Wainscott overpaid herself during 1999 by advancing herself an additional paycheck in July and November. "Both of these advances are recorded to the payroll register. No evidence was provided that either these advances had ever been repaid," the audit report reads.

The report adds that a former council president pro-tem has said in an affidavit that the authorization signatures on the two paychecks aren't hers [council president's].

The audit report alleges that Wainscott wrote unauthorized checks to herself totaling \$10,929.35 for mileage, office

supplies, stamps, computers, office machines and equipment.

Those expenses, according to an audit report summary, do not have supporting invoices and weren't listed with the bills in the minutes. "For several of these purchases, the former president pro-tem has signed an affidavit that the signature on the village check was not hers," reads the summary.

The audit summary states that Wainscott "was regularly using a Marathon gas card. Council never authorized Ms. Wainscott to do so."

Wainscott was appointed clerk-treasurer in July 1997.

Norris said there is an opportunity the Village will recover some of the money because Wainscott was bonded

by a bonding company in her official capacity as village clerk-treasurer.

Some of the material citations listed in the audit report include no annual financial report was prepared or filed; complete and accurate accounting records were not maintained; tax budget wasn't formally approved; and tax ordinance wasn't passed and wasn't filed by required date.

The material citations need to be corrected, Norris said.

Mayor Schaeffer said Village officials are in the process of "trying to get everything back up to speed. We're facing an uphill battle." She said they are getting assistance from the county auditor and other village clerks, and she praised the work of the current Midland clerk-treasurer, Grada Trimble.
