



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 27, 2010
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ORPS DIRECTOR EXPLOITED STAFF

New York State Inspector General Joseph Fisch determined that Lee Kyriacou, former Executive Director of the New York State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS), misused state staff for his private business such as booking a family vacation, driving his daughter to school and conducting a real estate search for Kyriacou's wife.

The Inspector General also found that Kyriacou refused to charge his vacation or sick time, claiming he was "reachable" when out of the office. ORPS oversees the local administration of real property assessments and has seven offices across the state. Kyriacou resigned in December 2009, during the Inspector General's investigation, and returned to the private sector.

"Mr. Kyriacou abused his authority and exploited his staff for inappropriate personal business," Inspector General Joseph Fisch said. "His departure from state service was appropriate."

Specifically, the Inspector General concluded that Kyriacou, who was appointed as ORPS executive director in September 2007, repeatedly had Executive Assistant Mary Beth Cimino complete his personal tasks on state time. Among other things, Cimino was instructed to:

- Start her work day early to drive Kyriacou's child 13 miles to school from medical appointments. Although three ORPS executives confronted him about these inappropriate requests, Kyriacou continued to make them. When a colleague likened his behavior to that of former state Comptroller Alan Hevesi (convicted for using state employees to chauffeur his wife), Kyriacou stated he saw nothing wrong with Hevesi's conduct, according to the report. Kyriacou told the Inspector General that in his private sector experience, assistants routinely undertook personal tasks for their bosses.
- Help arrange a Kyriacou family vacation to California.
- Set up apartment tours for the family's relocation to the Capital Region at the direction of Kyriacou's wife, who later criticized Cimino's efforts. Although ORPS General Counsel James O'Keefe advised Kyriacou that Cimino could not conduct personal business, his wife again asked Cimino to find her information on local moving companies.

The report also found that Kyriacou regularly drove his state-assigned Chevy Impala home to Beacon, N.Y. and then underreported his personal mileage by 6,000 miles in two years without claiming this personal benefit as required for income tax purposes.

In addition, Kyriacou directed subordinates to complete and approve his time sheets; he also had them complete and review their own time sheets, the Inspector General found. When questioned, Kyriacou attempted to blame any inaccurate attendance records or mileage discrepancies on his assistants' incompetence.

Because Kyriacou is no longer a state employee, he does not face discipline. As a result of the Inspector General's recommendations, ORPS agreed to strengthen its procedures. Specifically, ORPS has ceased assigning state vehicles to individual employees and intends to monitor mileage reporting and limit state cell phone use.

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