



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Final Report
September 10, 2010

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The New York State Inspector General found that Angela Preston, a former clerk at the Sullivan County Motor Vehicle Office, took money from her cash drawer on several occasions and later replaced it. Preston was arrested by the Inspector General and the Sullivan County Sheriff's Department and subsequently convicted in Monticello Village Court of the crime of Official Misconduct.

ALLEGATION

The Inspector General received a complaint from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles' (DMV) Division of Field Investigation that a cashier at the Sullivan County Motor Vehicle Office appeared to be "borrowing" money from her cash drawer.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

Although DMV operations in New York State are governed by the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, in 51 counties, including Sullivan County, these duties are fulfilled by the office of the County Clerk. While these county employees are hired and supervised by the County Clerk, when conducting DMV business they serve as agents of the DMV Commissioner and possess the same duties and responsibilities as those employed directly by DMV, including collecting fees associated with motor vehicle related transactions.

At the time relevant to this report, Angela Preston was a County Clerk Worker 1 assigned to the Clerk's Motor Vehicle Office at the Sullivan County Government Center in Monticello. Preston had been employed in that capacity since April 2008 and, among other duties, acted as a cashier accepting payments from motorists often provided in cash.

According to her supervisor, Judith Kelly, the DMV Administrator of the Sullivan County Motor Vehicle Office, Preston's conduct had come under scrutiny due to errors discovered in Preston's cash drawer at the conclusion of the business day on a number of occasions. Specifically, the money contained in Preston's drawer had been found either short or in excess. Kelly explained that Preston was often missing small amounts of money when she closed at the end of the day but then would allegedly "find" the money

the next day and provide a story to explain the mistake when replacing the funds. Kelly suspected that Preston was using her cash drawer as her personal bank by “borrowing” and replenishing the money on a regular basis.

When Preston counted or “cashed out” her drawer on June 2, 2009, it was found to be \$100 short. Preston was afforded the opportunity to examine her transactions for that day and made several phone calls to customers but could not account for the missing \$100. In a written statement given to her supervisor at the time, Preston claimed that she had inadvertently given a customer a \$100 bill while making change. Preston further claimed that she had spoken with the customer’s sister who would be returning the money two weeks later. On June 16, 2009, a money order for \$100 was received at the Sullivan County Motor Vehicle Office ostensibly from a woman named Iraida Ruiz-Diaz who claimed to be the sister of the customer involved in the aforementioned transaction. The envelope was addressed from I. Ruiz at 10 Terry Lane #82, Monticello, New York, and had the name “Angela” written on the front. Inside the envelope was a money order for \$100 and a handwritten note stating, “sorry for this” and bearing the signature, “Iraida Diaz”.

Subsequently, when Preston cashed out her money drawer on June 9, 2009, it was found to be \$50 short. Preston again examined her transactions for that day and indicated that she believed the relevant transaction involved a license renewal from a customer named Charles Perrenod, noting she had written a dollar sign (\$) on the record of this transaction which involved payment of a \$50 fee. However, Preston could offer no explanation for the \$50 shortfall. When the DMV office was being opened the next morning, an envelope was discovered on the floor directly under the main entrance door. Written on the outside of the envelope were the words, “Sorry Angela”, and inside the envelope was \$50 in cash. When asked about the envelope, Preston stated that she had been shopping at a department store the night before when she had purportedly encountered the wife of the person who had forgotten to pay the \$50 fee the previous day. This woman allegedly recognized Preston and attempted to give her the money, but Preston claimed that she had refused to accept the money and told the woman to slip the money under the door at the DMV office the next day.

Contradicting Preston’s account, a review of videotape from security cameras outside the DMV office revealed images of Preston herself placing the envelope under the door on June 10, 2009 at 7:46 a.m. When confronted with this evidence, Preston admitted she had placed the envelope under the door, but now maintained that she had received the envelope from the customer’s wife in the department store. Sullivan County DMV Administrator Judith Kelly subsequently contacted the ostensible customer, Perrenod, who indicated that he had paid Preston \$50 cash at the time of the transaction on June 9, 2009.

Investigators subsequently interviewed Angela Preston, who admitted she had had recent problems with shortages in her cash drawer and might have made some mistakes, but denied she had stolen any money. Preston also stated that when there are shortages in her drawer, she often later finds the money, but never puts in her own money. Preston subsequently admitted to placing the envelope containing \$50 under the door at the DMV office on June 10, 2009, purportedly because she did not want people to think she had stolen the money. Preston claimed that she must have forgotten to obtain the money from

the customer causing her to be \$50 short at the end of the day. Preston further claimed that she originally lied about putting the envelope under the door because she was afraid of losing her job. Preston then repeated the fanciful story about meeting a woman in the department store who gave her \$50 to cover the woman's husband's unpaid DMV fee.

Preston further admitted to sending in a money order with a fictitious note to cover the \$100 shortage on June 2, 2009. Preston added that family members had helped her collect \$100 for the money order and she mailed it from a fictitious customer. Preston maintained that she did not steal the money but rather was trying to rectify her mistake.

After consultation with the Sullivan County District Attorney, the Inspector General and the Sullivan County Sheriff's Department arrested Preston on December 14, 2009. On August 13, 2010, Preston pleaded guilty in Monticello Village Court to one count of Official Misconduct and received a conditional discharge. On September 10, 2010, Preston advised the Inspector General that she was resigning her position with Sullivan County.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inspector General found that Sullivan County Motor Vehicle Clerk Angela Preston misappropriated funds from the Sullivan County Clerk's Office which she later repaid, apparently as a method of taking money for her personal use. Preston was convicted of Official Misconduct and received a conditional discharge. She resigned her employment with Sullivan County.