



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

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### **DOI ARRESTS 2 PVO EMPLOYEES FOR ALTERING COMPUTER RECORDS** *Wiped Out \$2K Owed On Unpaid Summonses; And Established Payment Plan To Avoid Tow Enforcement On Personal Vehicle*

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrests of DONNA SHUMAN and WILLIE J. PETTEWAY, both City Department of Finance (DOF) Parking Violations Operations (PVO) employees, for unlawfully accessing the PVO computer system, and altering data relating to debt they each owed on unpaid parking summonses. SHUMAN is charged with Computer Tampering by placing the \$2,078 debt she owed on outstanding parking summonses into an "uncollectible" status. In a separate case, PETTEWAY, also charged with Computer Tampering, placed himself, and 3 other PVO respondents, including his wife, on an unauthorized payment plan for debt they each owed on unpaid parking summonses, thus exempting their vehicles from being towed.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said, "Both of these defendants used their positions at PVO to illegally access the computer system for personal gain. These prosecutions are an example of inter-agency cooperation and underscore DOI's commitment to stop municipal corruption in its tracks."

DOF Commissioner Martha E. Stark said, "Altering summons records for personal gain amounts to stealing from New York City, and I simply will not tolerate such a betrayal of the public trust. To prevent future acts of theft, I have asked my staff to work with DOI to recommend ways to prevent Finance Department employees from manipulating their own parking summons information. I also want them to recommend new measures to improve our ability to detect this kind of fraud."

Commissioners Gill Hearn and Stark said that PVO has begun the process of reinstating the outstanding debts, including penalties and interest.

The facts and circumstances leading to the 2 arrests are summarized below:

#### **DONNA SHUMAN**

SHUMAN, who worked as a Collector in the Parking Summons Collection Unit, was responsible for locating respondents who owe on unpaid parking summonses by searching through a variety of resources, including credit checks and telephone directories. Request payment notices are issued to those respondents who are located. Summonses are placed in uncollectible status if a collector is not able to locate a violator after

considerable effort.

In December 2001, the PVO received notification from the City Comptroller's Office to search its records to determine if SHUMAN, who was suing the City on an unrelated matter, owed an outstanding debt to the City. DOI began an investigation after PVO reported that its records search revealed that SHUMAN had indeed owed a \$2,078 debt on outstanding parking tickets issued against her vehicle, but that debt had been placed in uncollectible status. The DOI investigation confirmed that, in February 1999, SHUMAN unlawfully accessed the PVO computer system, and altered the data records in order to list her outstanding debt as "uncollectible."

### **WILLIE J. PETTEWAY**

PETTEWAY, also a Collector, worked in PVO's Passenger Collections Unit (PSU). His duties included approving payment plans for PVO respondents, collecting monies received as part of those payment plans, and initiating bank restraints and income executions in event of defaults. On 5 separate occasions, between November 13, 1998 and July 25, 2001, PETTEWAY accessed the PVO computer system, and illegally assigned the unpaid PVO debt incurred against his and 3 other vehicles, 1 of which was registered to his wife, to a payment plan or tow enforcement hold. By placing the unpaid accounts on such plans, PETTEWAY reduced the probability that the vehicles would be towed.

Commissioner Gill Hearn explained that before PVO approves any payment plan -- permitted only on judgments exceeding \$800 -- an application must be completed by the respondent/violator and submitted to PSU. In addition, a respondent is required to make a down payment of at least one third of the total amount due in parking summonses. The DOI investigation revealed that PETTEWAY submitted neither a payment plan application, nor a down payment. Moreover, PETTEWAY owed \$195 on the outstanding parking summonses issued to his vehicle, less than the \$800 threshold required before PVO would authorize a payment plan for a respondent.

The scheme was discovered when one of PETTEWAY's supervisors, in conducting a quality control review of payment plan tow enforcement holds entered on May 18, 2001, noticed that the surname of the person to whom a license plate number was registered was the same as the PVO employee entering the codes.

SHUMAN, 36, of 111-32 209<sup>th</sup> Street in Queens, a PVO employee since July 1995, is currently assigned to PVO's Rental Unit, earning an annual salary of \$36,402. PETTEWAY, 58, of 260 65<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn, has been employed at PVO for the past 7 years, earning an annual salary of \$36,789. They each have been charged with Computer Tampering in the First Degree, a Class E felony, and Obstructing Governmental Administration in the Second Degree and Official Misconduct, both Class A Misdemeanors. If convicted, they face up to 4 years in prison. Both were immediately suspended without pay upon arrest.

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to DOF Commissioner Stark and members of her staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigations were conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and DOF Inspector General Vincent E. Green and members of his staff, including Assistant Inspector General Alberta E. Ancrum, Chief Investigator Joseph Medina, and Confidential Investigators Dalila Cummings, Roxanne Harmon and Michael Granatstein.

The Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting both cases.