

BuffaloNews.com

County paid four workers double wages

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Published: July 27, 2011, 12:00 AM

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Updated: July 27, 2011, 6:42 AM

Erie County lets its employees hold two or more county jobs only sparingly, and at no time are they to be paid while working two jobs at once.

But county auditors say that in reviewing the first five months of 2011 they found four instances of employees allowed to hold two jobs being paid for both at the same time. The double wages were rare, and amounted to only about \$100 in overpayments.

But the auditors said the findings highlight the shortcomings of the paper-based timekeeping system that is being phased out of county government in favor of the electronic swipe-card system.

County Executive Chris Collins has installed an electronic swipe-card system in the Rath County Office Building, but several other county buildings do not yet have swipe cards.

In these latest cases, the employees worked in the county library system, one of the auditors said Tuesday. In 2006, county auditors found an example of parks employees being paid twice, a no-no that again involved only a small amount of wages.

Kenneth H. Stone, the library system's chief financial officer, said employees review time records to ensure employees are never paid for working two jobs at once.

"If there is a situation where any hours have overlapped, we will correct it," he said, but he said he would want to see the time sheets the auditors reviewed.

Employees holding two or more county jobs are not to end one job and start the next without at least a 15-minute buffer between them, or 30 minutes if the second job is in another building. The auditors said they found dozens of occasions when employees started the second job too quickly.

Michael Szukala, the chief county auditor for Comptroller Mark C. Poloncarz, said his team set out to determine whether second jobs are indeed allowed only rarely. They found 57 county employees who held more than one job title, and in a few cases there were employees with three titles. For example, they found a full-time building maintenance mechanic who also held two part-time "caretaker" titles.

The county has more than 5,000 employees, including the Buffalo&Erie County Public Library.

Auditors found 10 employees receiving overpayments for various reasons and said the Personnel Department should work to recover the \$552 in question, a tiny percentage of the county's \$125 million payroll over the five months that the auditors reviewed.