

STATEMENT FROM THE FFPD BOARD RE: CHECK FRAUD

Rumors and misconceptions continue to swirl on social media platforms and community conversation. This post is to clarify the situation as it stands at the time of posting.

TCSO criminal report

- On December 28th upon learning of the suspected fraud issue identified by the bank where the FFPD operating account is held, Board President Paul del Toro called Teller County Sheriff Office (TCSO) dispatch and reported the issue to the responding deputy.
- All evidence known at that time was provided to TCSO in furtherance of the investigation.
- TCSO Case # 23-02638 was opened by the deputy.
- The report appears to have been filed under Mr. del Toro's name as opposed to the FFPD.
- Mr. del Toro and Vicky Collings reached out to the deputy multiple times after the initial reporting to provide additional evidence as it came to light.
- Mr. del Toro spoke to the issue at a public meeting held January 17th. A citizen participating in the meeting filmed Mr. del Toro's statement on Zoom and sent it to various media outlets.
- When media inquiries were made to Lt. Bunting at TCSO, upon her return to the office after an absence, she performed a cursory search for reports filed by FFPD. The report was not found in that search as the initial report was filed under Mr. del Toro's name.
- As multiple inquiries were placed to Lt. Bunting and her search for a report did not net results, on January 22nd she initiated a request for a meeting with Chief Quick and members of the board.
- On January 23rd Mr. del Toro and Mr. Groat met with Sheriff Mikesell, Lt. Bunting and two TCSO investigators within the department.
- After this meeting TCSO, now with a better understanding of the reporting that occurred, subsequently did a more extensive search and found the active investigation which remains ongoing.

Transparency and communication to the public

- On January 7th at the first public meeting held after the issue was discovered and reported to TCSO, Mr. del Toro announced the issue
- Additional announcements and updates were provided at the regularly scheduled monthly meeting on January 17th and then again at the Special Meeting held January 24th.

Fraud versus Embezzlement

- Fox 21 news interviewed Mr. del Toro on January 24th and subsequently aired a story on their newscasts regarding the issue and clearly and correctly referred to the issue as fraud.
- On January 25th the story was posted to Fox 21's website and their Facebook page. In the transition from video to digital content someone on their team changed the original wording from fraud to embezzlement for reasons unknown.
- Upon learning of this Mr. del Toro immediately contacted Fox 21 to clarify the issue and requested the story and post be updated. Fox 21 did immediately update both stories with the correct definition as the case currently stands.
- FFPD has no indication that embezzlement occurred. That term was added to the headline by FOX 21 without justification. A case for embezzlement can only be ruled as such by the TCSO, not the media. To label the issue as embezzlement, at this time, would be without cause.

Source document used to perpetrate the fraud

- While the BODs internal review of previously produced live checks have resulted in, what by all appearances, would be the source of the copied fraudulent checks, we are not forensic investigators and cannot say with certainty that check is in fact the source.
- Even if our assumptions were correct, it would be irresponsible to name the entity to whom the check was written. Especially considering the check was written to an organization and not an individual, we have no way to identify the chain of custody from the time the check was signed and mailed until it possibly was used in the fraud.
- Naming that entity at this time would potentially expose the FFPD to libel and slander charges.
- The check in question has been presented to TCSO as evidence for their further investigation.

Status of accounts and District funds

- As has been reported multiple times, no District funds have been lost and are fully intact.
- The impacted account is under strict control and no transactions are posted without the express authorization of Mr. del Toro.

TCSO is investigating and we have been advised not to discuss it any further. Therefore, no additional posts or discussions will be made by the FFPD BOD or its members until additional information is available from law enforcement.