

**BEFORE THE CITY OF ATLANTA
BOARD OF ETHICS**

In the matter of:

Perceta Watkins

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Case No. CO-07-030

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

This settlement agreement is made between Ginny Looney, the Ethics Officer of the City of Atlanta and Perceta Watkins, a city employee and the Respondent.

The parties agree to the following terms to resolve this case prior to a probable cause determination by the Board:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Perceta Watkins is a city employee who works as a contracts coordinator in the Office of General Services, a division of the Executive Offices. She was the employee responsible for scheduling events, processing rental agreements, and collecting rental fees for use of the atrium and auditorium (old city council chambers) at City Hall from November 2003 to October 2005.
2. The Compliance Unit of the Department of Law investigated the Office of General Services' event management program in 2005 and issued a report on November 15, 2006.
3. The Law Department's Investigative Report shows that between October 25, 2003, and September 24, 2005, Ms. Watkins scheduled, processed agreements, and collected fees for at least two weddings in the atrium for which the renter paid no more than half of the standard rental fee for private or non-city related events.
4. The Law Department's Investigative Report shows that between May 29, 2004 and October 8, 2005, Ms. Watkins scheduled and processed agreements for at least three weddings, a graduation party, and a retirement party for which the user made no payment of the standard rental fee for private events.
5. There is evidence that Ms. Watkins was acting on the instructions of Deborah Scott Brooks, Director of the Office of General Services, when fees were waived, not charged, or not collected for private events held in the atrium or auditorium in City Hall.
6. On January 22, 2007, Ms. Watkins was suspended without pay for 20 days for failing to follow established guidelines and procedures for rental agreements and for cash handling, accounting, and reporting. Ms. Watkins did not contest the suspension, which she served in February and March 2007.

7. There is no evidence that Ms. Watkins received any personal benefit from her actions in scheduling, processing agreements, and collecting rental fees for private events held in the atrium or auditorium in City Hall.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

8. Ms. Watkins is a city employee subject to the Code of Ethics. See Atlanta, Ga., Code § 2-801.
9. Section 2-811 of the Code of Ethics states: "No official or employee shall request, use or permit the use of any publicly owned or publicly supported property, vehicle, equipment, labor or service for the private advantage of such official or employee or any other person or private entity."
10. The Board of Ethics in Formal Advisory Opinion 2003-1 stated that a city official "is not entitled to a reduction or waiver of any rental fee for the personal use of parks property or for the use of any other private person or entity on terms that are not available to the general public."
11. City employees violate section 2-811 when they reduce or waive the rental fee for private or non-city related events held in the atrium and auditorium at City Hall, except on the same terms available to the general public.
12. Ms. Watkins permitted the use of city property for the private advantage of other persons and private entities when she failed to charge or collect the full rental fee for weddings, parties, and other non-city related events held in the atrium and auditorium at City Hall in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

AGREEMENT

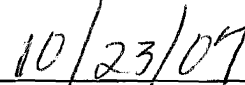
13. Ms. Watkins acknowledges that she violated the Code of Ethics when she failed to charge or collect the full rental fee for weddings, receptions, parties, and other private events held in the atrium and auditorium at City Hall. She believed that she had no choice and was required to follow the instructions of her supervisor, Ms. Brooks, in waiving or reducing rental fees for the non-city related events.
14. Because Ms. Watkins has accepted responsibility for her actions, has been suspended for four weeks without pay for her role in the improper use of city facilities for private events, and agrees to avoid similar activity in the future, the Ethics Officer agrees to resolve this matter without taking any further action or seeking any further penalty.
15. Ms. Watkins agrees that she will cooperate with any investigation and voluntarily appear as a witness before the Board of Ethics in any proceeding involving the use of the City Hall atrium or auditorium for private advantage; she further agrees that she will abide by the city's written policies on the use of City Hall facilities for meetings and events, and will in the future comply with the Code of Ethics.
16. The parties agree to enter this settlement agreement to resolve all factual and legal issues raised in this matter and to reach a final disposition without the

necessity of an evidentiary hearing before the Board to determine Respondent's liability.

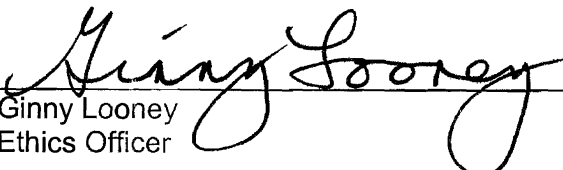
17. The Respondent understands and voluntarily waives all procedural rights under the Code of Ordinances, including the determination of probable cause and the right to personally appear before the Board, subpoena witnesses to testify, confront and cross-examine all witnesses, and have the Board hear the matter at any enforcement hearing.
18. The Respondent acknowledges that this agreement is not binding on any other law enforcement or governmental agency and does not preclude the Board of Ethics from referring this matter to, cooperating with, or assisting any other law enforcement or government agency on this or any other related matter.
19. The Ethics Officer will submit this settlement agreement for consideration by the Board of Ethics at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the Board must enter an order approving the agreement before it becomes the final decision and order in the case.
20. The parties agree that this agreement shall become null and void in the event that the Board refuses to accept it. The Respondent further agrees that no member of the Board of Ethics or its staff shall be disqualified from participating in any hearing before the Board because of prior consideration of this settlement agreement.



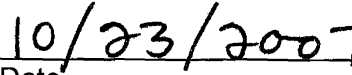
Perceta Watkins
Respondent



Date



Ginny Looney
Ethics Officer



Date