

# The ADVOCATE

## Thief attempts to cash city check

By Jeff Morganteen  
Staff Writer

Posted: 01/08/2009 02:47:10 AM EST

STAMFORD - A city check for \$51,600 was stolen last month after it was sent to a private school in Greenwich to pay for special education services for Stamford students, officials said.

The city was alerted to the theft when someone forged a new name on the check, then tried to deposit it two weeks ago in Atlanta, officials said.

The forgery did not succeed because a fraud prevention service provided by financial firm J.P. Morgan caught it before the transaction was approved, city Director of Administration Sandra Dennies said.

It's unclear which police agency is investigating the incident, because it's still unknown where the theft occurred, Stamford officials said.

But they were told that the forgery and deposit likely occurred in Atlanta, officials said.

Phone messages left with the Atlanta Police Department were not returned.

In December, the Board of Education mailed the check to Eagle Hill School in Greenwich, which serves children with learning disabilities ages 6 to 16, to pay for instruction provided to special education students from Stamford.

But the check never got to Eagle Hill School, officials said.

Someone stole it, then tried to deposit it in a bank account set up at an Atlanta credit union, city officials said.

Someone altered the check so that instead of Eagle Hill, the payee was a man's name, city officials said.

"We got the check back today, and they did a darn good job getting that payee to come off the check," city Controller Lisa Reynolds said of the forgery. "It almost looked air-brushed."

Last year, the city began using a fraud prevention service that examines check transactions, officials said. It requires that the city tell the bank the check number, amount and name of the recipient, officials said.

When checks issued by the city are deposited or cashed, the information on the paper check is checked against the information stored at the bank. Any differences are reported by e-mail to the city, which has four hours to approve the transaction, Reynolds said.

This was the first incident since the city began using the fraud prevention program, officials said. Dennies said she could not recall whether the city had any incidents before beginning the program.

Eagle Hill School Headmaster Mark Griffin said the Stamford Board of Education alerted him to the theft, and he does not know whether the check ever arrived there.

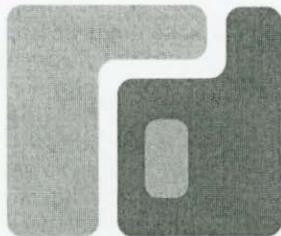
- Staff Writer Jeff Morganteen can be reached at jeff.morganteen@scni.com or 964-2215.

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™