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For Immediate Release

FORMER EMERGENCY FINANCIAL MANAGER FOR HIGHLAND PARK CHARGED WITH FOUR FELONIES

Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy has charged Arthur Blackwell II, 56 of Detroit with four felonies and one misdemeanor for alleged crimes committed when he was Emergency Financial Manager for Highland Park. From April 13, 2005 through April 2009 Blackwell was the Emergency Financial Manager for the City of Highland Park. He was an appointed public official in control of the City of Highland Park's finances.

The State of Michigan's Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board appointed him to the position. The Board initially compensated Blackwell at the rate of one dollar per year. In 2008 the contract was renegotiated for an \$11,000 per month salary. The Michigan Department of Treasury conducted an audit and concluded that Blackwell was fully compensated for his services when he received \$110,000 from April 2008 until his termination from the position in April 2009.

Blackwell allegedly misused his position and caused \$264,000 in checks to be issued to him from City of Highland Park funds. He retained the proceeds and converted them to his own use. On April 14, 2009 Robert Kleine of the Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board sent a letter to Blackwell requesting repayment of the \$264,000 no later than April 30, 2009. To date, Blackwell has failed to repay the unauthorized funds.

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Blackwell has been charged with:

Embezzlement - \$100,000 or more – being an agent, servant, or employee of the State of Michigan – Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board and/or the City of Highland Park, did convert to his own use, without the consent of his principal, money, or personal property of his principal, having a value of \$100,000 or more, that came into the defendant's possession or under the defendant's charge or control by virtue of his/her relationship with the principal.

Felony: 20 years and/or a fine up to \$50,000, or 3 times the amount embezzled, whichever is greater

Embezzlement – Public Official over \$50.00 – did, being the agent or servant of any person holding public office in this state, knowingly and unlawfully appropriate to his own use, or to the use of any other person, money or property received by him in his/her official capacity or employment to-wit: money, of the value of \$50.00 or more.

Felony: 10 years and \$5,000

Common Law Offenses – Misconduct in office.

Felony: 5 years and/or \$10,000

Note: This is a common law offense that has been charged under the theory that Blackwell abused the power of his office by: a) improperly taking money; and b) unjustly enriching himself while he was an appointee of a public body.

Public Officers – Refusing to Turn Over Books/Money to Successor – did, willfully refuse to turn over money which came into his possession by virtue of public office to the State of Michigan and/or City of Highland Park, his successor in office.

Felony: 4 years and/or \$5,000

Note: On April 14 a demand was made by the Local Emergency Financial Assistance Loan Board for Blackwell to turn over the money by April 30, 2009.

Public Money – Safe Keeping – did use public money for his own use.

High Court Misdemeanor – 2 years or \$1,000

The arraignment on the warrant will take place in 30th District Court, 12050 Woodward in Highland Park on Thursday, October 8, 2009 at 11:30 a.m. before Judge Bridgette Officer. An update will be sent out to confirm the time of arraignment.

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