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Release #26-2013
nyc.gov/html/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2013**

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**DOI INVESTIGATION LEADS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS FRAUD AND THEFT CHARGES AGAINST
FORMER HRA EMPLOYEE AND THREE INELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on the arrests today of a former Associate Job Opportunity Specialist with the City Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) and three ineligible recipients charged with stealing \$14,489 in public assistance funds. DOI’s investigation found the HRA employee fraudulently issued more than one dozen “Special Grants” for household items and furniture to three ineligible recipients. The defendants were charged today in a 26-count indictment obtained by the office of New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, “Welfare fraud squanders public funds and undermines a program that assists many needy New Yorkers. Most troubling is that a City employee entrusted with protecting these precious public dollars is charged with stealing them.”

According to the indictment, the following individuals were charged with the following offenses:

- REGINALD POINTER, 46, of Brooklyn, NY, was charged with three counts each of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, class D felonies; 18 counts of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree and one count of Defrauding the Government, class E felonies; and one count of Official Misconduct, a class A misdemeanor.

POINTER began employment with HRA in September 2006 and resigned in March 2013, during this investigation. His annual salary at that time was \$58,947.

- JEANETTE SPEIGHTS, 51, and ERICA WIMBERLY, 32, all of Manhattan, NY, were each charged with one count each of Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree and Grand Larceny in the Third Degree. VERONICA PIERCE, 31, of Manhattan, was arrested late today on the same charges and had not yet been arraigned.

Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison, a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year’s incarceration.

According to DOI’s investigation and the charges outlined in the indictment, HRA reported to DOI that its Dyckman Center, at 4055 10th Ave. in Manhattan, had issued a high volume of “Special Grants” to three ineligible recipients. “Special Grant Code 60s” are funds HRA distributes to public assistance recipients to purchase furniture and other household items when individuals have moved and are establishing a home. DOI’s investigation found that PIERCE received seven grants between December 2010 and June 2011, totaling \$6,292; SPEIGHTS received five grants between July 2010 and January 2011, totaling \$3,442; and WIMBERLY received six grants between September 2010 and July 2011, totaling \$4,755; and that POINTER approved 15 of those 18 grants. The investigation found that none of the recipients had relocated during the time periods in which they received the grants, nor did they provide any documentary proof in violation of HRA’s policy regarding the issuance of “Special Grant Code 60s”. The investigation determined that in some instances the defendants split the grant they received with POINTER and that POINTER, in violation of HRA policy, had personal relationships with grant recipients.

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Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., HRA Commissioner Robert Doar, and their staffs, for their assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for HRA.

Assistant District Attorney Eun-Ha Kim, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Daniela Gallo, Chief of the District Attorney's Public Assistance Fraud Unit, are assigned to the prosecution of the case.

An indictment is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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