



The City of New York
Department of Investigation
ROSE GILL HEARN
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

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CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI
(212) 825-5931

DOI ARRESTS WOMAN CHARGED WITH CASHING STOLEN CITY-ISSUED RENT CHECK
-Investigation is third in the past seven months involving similar facts-

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of SHARONDA SMITH, 43, of Brooklyn, charged with cashing a rent subsidy check issued by the New York City Department of Finance ("DOF") to a landlord in Brooklyn. It is the third arrest of an individual since September 2010 on charges of illegally cashing a City-issued rent subsidy check issued to a landlord. The investigation that resulted in today's arrest began after DOI was notified by DOF that a landlord had not received DOF's rent subsidy check issued to him through a City social service program that assists individuals in obtaining housing. The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Illegally cashing a City-issued check is a short route to arrest and prosecution. These arrests show the City's security features, including reporting potential criminal conduct to DOI, lead to protecting City funds and stopping the fraud."

The details of today's arrest as outlined in the criminal complaint:

- SHARONDA SMITH, 43, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was arrested today and charged with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Forgery in the Second Degree, class D felonies, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony; Petit Larceny, Forgery in the Third Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree, class A misdemeanors. 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 by up to a year's incarceration.

According to the criminal complaint, DOI's investigation found that the defendant took a City-issued check issued to a landlord in Brooklyn, signed the landlord's name without his permission or authority, and illegally cashed the \$1,145 check at a grocery store in Brooklyn.

Below are details of the previous cases as outlined in the criminal complaints:

- In October 2010, DOI arrested STEPHEN SMITH, 43, of Staten Island, N.Y., who was charged with Petit Larceny and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fifth Degree, class A misdemeanors. The case is being prosecuted by the office of Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.

According to the criminal complaint, DOI's investigation found the defendant took a City-issued check for \$912 from a residential mailbox and cashed it at a Staten Island check cashing establishment in December 2009. The investigation found the defendant did not have permission or authority to take or cash the check. The case is pending in Richmond County Criminal Court.

- In September 2010, DOI arrested CARLOS PRINCE, 52, of Richmond Hills in Queens, N.Y., who was charged with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D felony, and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony. He paid restitution of \$1,316 and pleaded guilty to Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree, a class A misdemeanor. The office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown prosecuted the case.

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According to the criminal complaint, DOI's investigation determined that in December 2009 at a Queens check cashing establishment the defendant endorsed and cashed a City-issued check for \$1,316 that was purportedly made out to him. City records showed the City-issued check was not in fact issued to the defendant, who did not have permission or authority to possess or cash the check.

The City has security features in place to identify and stop payment on forged City checks and, as a result, in each of the three cases the City did not lose any money due to the separate schemes.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes, Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr., Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown, DOF Commissioner David Frankel, City Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond, and their staffs, for their assistance in this investigation.

Each of these investigations was conducted by DOI's Office of Inspector General for DOF.

Criminal complaints are accusations. 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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