# TANGIPAHOA PARISH COUNCIL – PARISH LANDFILL



INVESTIGATIVE AUDIT ISSUED FEBRUARY 15, 2017

# LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR 1600 NORTH THIRD STREET POST OFFICE BOX 94397 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9397

#### **LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR**

DARYL G. PURPERA, CPA, CFE

# **DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATIVE AUDIT**

ROGER W. HARRIS, J.D., CCEP

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February 15, 2017

# THE HONORABLE ROBBY MILLER, PRESIDENT, AND MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL TANGIPAHOA PARISH GOVERNMENT

Amite, Louisiana

We have audited certain transactions of the Tangipahoa Parish Landfill. Our audit was conducted in accordance with Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes to determine the validity of complaints we received.

Our audit consisted primarily of inquiries and the examination of selected financial records and other documentation. The scope of our audit was significantly less than that required by *Government Auditing Standards*.

The accompanying report presents our findings and recommendations, as well as management's response. This is a public report. Copies of this report have been delivered to the District Attorney for the 21<sup>st</sup> Judicial District of Louisiana and others as required by law.

Respectfully submitted,

Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE

Legislative Auditor

DGP/aa

TANGIPAHOAPARISHLANDFILL

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Scrap Metal Payments Not Deposited**

Tangipahoa Parish Government's former Landfill Manager, Mr. Terrance Stewart, may have violated state law by personally receiving \$18,533 from the sale of Parish-owned scrap metal to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C. from April 2013 to April of 2016. Parish records show that the Parish did not receive payment from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C. for \$27,681 in scrap metal sale tickets.

## **Unpaid Dumping Fees**

Mr. Terrance Stewart, Tangipahoa Parish Landfill Manager, allowed a contractor to dispose of roofing debris at the Parish Landfill without paying a fee. Parish records show that \$49,330 that should have been collected was not. In addition, the contractor claimed he paid Mr. Stewart a reduced fee in cash instead of paying the required fee to the Landfill. Mr. Stewart may have violated state law by not charging the required fees and may have accepted cash payments from a contractor that were not deposited in Parish bank accounts.

# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Tangipahoa Parish is located in southeast Louisiana and has a population of 121,097 (2010 Census). The Parish is governed by a "council-president" form of government that consists of 10 elected council members representing the various districts within the parish and an elected Parish President. The Parish operates a landfill for parish residents' use to dispose of household waste and other refuse, such as construction materials and household appliances. The Parish Landfill (Landfill) is funded through ad valorem taxes and user fees residents and contractors pay to dispose of certain types of refuse.

The user fees depend on where a resident lives and/or the type of refuse disposed. For example, the Parish's rural residents are charged a fee on their property taxes and, therefore, do not pay a user fee when they dispose of trash at the Landfill.

When a rural resident makes a trip to the Landfill to dispose of their trash, the description of "Rural Resident – Active" is used on the scale ticket, and the rate is set at \$0.00/ ton. However, if the refuse is construction debris or roofing materials, a fee is assessed regardless of where the citizen lives. An ordinance was passed in 2009 to allow citizens to obtain a permit to dispose of roofing materials at a reduced price. The purpose of this ordinance was to encourage citizens to dispose of roofing materials in the Landfill rather than improperly disposing of the material.

Landfill users also dispose of scrap metal, which includes household appliances (e.g., refrigerators, washers, and dryers). Landfill employees separate the scrap metal and typically sell it to an area scrap yard. Beginning in April 2013, the Landfill sold all of its scrap metal to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C.

We started our audit after receiving complaints concerning certain Landfill transactions. This audit was initiated to determine the validity of those complaints. The procedures performed during this audit included:

- (1) interviewing Landfill employees and other persons, as appropriate;
- (2) examining selected Landfill documents and records;
- (3) gathering and examining external parties' documents and records; and
- (4) reviewing applicable state laws and regulations.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Scrap Metal Payments Not Deposited**

Tangipahoa Parish Government's former Landfill Manager, Mr. Terrance Stewart, may have violated state law<sup>1,2,3</sup> by personally receiving \$18,533 from the sale of Parishowned scrap metal to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C. from April 2013 to April of 2016. Parish records show that the Parish did not receive payment from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C. for \$27,681 in scrap metal sale tickets.

Tangipahoa Parish Government (Parish) operates a landfill that accepts scrap metal from parish residents, such as refrigerators and laundry appliances. Mr. Terrance Stewart became the Parish Landfill Manager in 2011.

The Louisiana Administrative Code<sup>4</sup> requires landfills remove scrap metal (white goods) every 30 days to reduce the volume of waste dumped in the landfill. According to Parish records, the Parish sold all of the Landfill's scrap metal to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, L.L.C. (Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard) from April 2013 to April 2016.

Some uncollected scrap metal sales to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard were identified during the Parish's annual audit. This resulted in Parish employees reviewing the Landfill's records from 2014 to 2016 involving Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. The Parish found \$15,389 of uncollected scrap metal sales and sent an invoice to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. Keith Barr, owner of Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard, stated that he had not looked at the Parish's invoice; however, if he received an invoice he must not have paid the Parish. We reviewed additional Parish records from 2013 and found an additional \$12,292 in uncollected scrap metal sales to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard.

We spoke to Mr. Barr again and he changed his previous statement and asserted that he paid Mr. Stewart cash for some of the scrap metal Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard purchased from the Landfill. He also stated that Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard had paid either the Landfill or Mr. Stewart for all scrap metal purchased from the Landfill. Mr. Barr said that, on several occasions, Mr. Stewart returned a check made payable to the Landfill from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard and asked for cash or a check to be written to him personally. Mr. Barr further explained that Mr. Stewart told him that the scrap metal was not the Parish's property. Mr. Barr said that he paid Mr. Stewart as Mr. Stewart directed because he was the manager of the Landfill. Mr. Barr further stated that he paid for all of the scrap metal Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard removed from the Landfill. Mr. Barr explained that when he received the invoice from the Parish, he spoke to Mr. Stewart, and it was his understanding that Mr. Stewart was going to pay it. However, after Mr. Stewart had retained an attorney, he realized something was not right.

According to Mr. Barr, Mr. Stewart contacted him when the Landfill had a load of scrap metal ready to be picked up. Mr. Barr stated that, after he was contacted, he sent a truck to the Landfill to pick up the scrap metal. The weight of the scrap metal was documented on Landfill scale tickets, and a copy was provided to the Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard driver that picked up the scrap

metal. Mr. Barr further stated that Mr. Stewart usually visited him at his business a few days later to collect the payment for the scrap metal.

We met with Mr. Stewart and discussed the \$27,681 in unpaid scrap metal invoices. Mr. Stewart stated that Mr. Barr must not have paid the Parish for the scrap metal if there were no deposits to the Parish bank account. Mr. Stewart told us that he never received cash from Mr. Barr or Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. However, Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's bank statements show \$18,533 of checks were made payable to Mr. Stewart and were subsequently negotiated. The signature on the back of the checks appears to be Mr. Stewart's.

We reviewed Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's records and found copies of checks payable to the Landfill that match Landfill scale ticket dates, times, and weights. However, several of the checks payable to "Tangipahoa Parish Landfill" had "void" written on the checks and were not negotiated. We also found checks in the same amount as the voided check made payable to "Terrance Stewart" dated within days of the original check payable to the Tangipahoa Parish Landfill. In other instances, we found (1) checks payable to "Tangipahoa Parish Landfill" that were not negotiated and (2) handwritten notes indicating cash was paid for some of Parish's scrap metal on Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's documentation. Some examples of Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's documentation are explained below, and the documents are included as Attachments A, B, and C.

- A. An April 21, 2014 Landfill scale ticket No. 452043 indicates 13,460 pounds of outbound scrap metal was picked up by a driver from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. The documentation presented by Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard indicates "Tangipahoa Parish Landfill" as the customer and the weight of scrap metal at 13,460 pounds with a price of \$942.20. Mr. Stewart signed Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's records and check No. 11823 payable to Terrance Stewart in the amount of \$942.20, which appears to have been negotiated by Mr. Stewart on April 25, 2014.
- B. A June 9, 2014 Landfill scale ticket No. 455385 indicates 26,780 pounds of outbound scrap metal was picked up by a driver from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. The documentation presented by Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard indicates "Tangipahoa Parish Landfill" as the customer and the weight of the scrap metal at 26,780 pounds with a price \$1,673.75. The document was signed by Mr. Stewart. Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's bank records show checks payable to both the Tangipahoa Parish Landfill (\$700) and Mr. Stewart (\$973.75) totaling \$1,673.75 within a week of the date the scrap metal was picked up. The \$700 check payable to the "Tangipahoa Parish Landfill" was never negotiated. However, the \$973.75 check payable to "Terrance Stewart" appears to have been negotiated by Mr. Stewart on June 13, 2014.
- C. In January 2015, Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard submitted a bid for a "yellow fuel truck" owned by the Parish and located at the Landfill. Mr. Barr provided us with a bid for \$8.00 per hundred pounds of scrap metal and a copy of a \$1,091.20 check payable to Tangipahoa Parish Landfill with "Fuel Truck Scrap" written in the memo line. Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's bank records show this check was not

negotiated. We also found "PD CASH" handwritten on Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard's documentation. The tow truck driver that picked up the fuel truck from the Landfill stated that the truck was delivered to Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard. However, the Parish's "Fixed Assets" inventory completed by Mr. Stewart, dated April 4, 2016, indicates the status of the yellow fuel truck is active.

If Mr. Stewart personally received \$18,533 from Hwy. 16 Scrap Yard for Landfill scrap metal, Mr. Stewart may have violated state law. <sup>1,2,3</sup>

## **Unpaid Dumping Fees**

Mr. Terrance Stewart, Tangipahoa Parish Landfill Manager, allowed a contractor to dispose of roofing debris at the Parish Landfill without paying a fee. Parish records show that \$49,330 that should have been collected was not. In addition, the contractor claimed he paid Mr. Stewart a reduced fee in cash instead of paying the required fee to the Landfill. Mr. Stewart may have violated state law<sup>1,2,3</sup> by not charging the required fees and may have accepted cash payments from a contractor that were not deposited in Parish bank accounts.

According to Mr. Stewart, all contractors or users disposing of construction refuse or roofing materials are assessed a fee per ton to dump at the Landfill. He stated that all contractors and roofers should pay to dump at the commercial rate. The fee for "commercial" waste increased from \$28 per ton in 2013 to \$35 per ton in 2016.

According to Landfill employees, Mr. Stewart instructed them not to charge a fee to one contractor, Mr. Paz Lopez. Parish records show that Mr. Lopez made 331 trips to the Landfill and dumped roofing materials but was not charged the required fee. Mr. Stewart denied instructing employees to allow Mr. Lopez to dispose of construction materials without a fee and stated that this contractor was allowed to dump one time without a fee because Mr. Lopez stated that the roofing materials were from his home, and he should be able to dump it for free.

Mr. Stewart further stated that sometimes you must give people the benefit of the doubt and he may have told his employees one time to let Mr. Lopez dispose of roofing debris without paying the fee. However, all five Tangipahoa Parish Landfill scale employees stated that Mr. Stewart told them on separate occasions not to charge a fee to Mr. Lopez. The following chart shows the number of times Mr. Lopez dumped each year and the fees that he should have paid.

Mr. Lopez's Commercial Waste Disposal at Parish Government Landfill									
Year	Total Number of Trips	Total Tons Disposed	Payment Due to Landfill	Paid to Landfill					
2013	63	283	\$7,971	\$0.00					
2014	32	120	3,475	0.00					
2015	104	422	14,178	0.00					
2016	132	677	23,706	0.00					
Total	331	1,502	\$49,330	\$0.00					

Mr. Lopez refused to meet with us in person; however, we spoke with him on the telephone, and he stated that the Parish Landfill Manager (Mr. Stewart) asked to be paid \$50 for each trip instead of paying Landfill employees based on the weight when he visited the Landfill. Mr. Lopez stated that because this man (Mr. Stewart) was the Landfill Manager, he thought that it was okay to pay him directly. In addition, Mr. Lopez said he met the Landfill Manager (Mr. Stewart) at a gas station or at a restaurant to pay him the \$50 per trip dumping fee. The two Landfill employees who are responsible for the daily deposits stated that Mr. Stewart never brought them cash to add to a deposit. If Mr. Lopez's statements are correct, he paid Mr. Stewart \$16,550 in cash to dispose of construction waste instead of paying the \$49,330 fee that is usually charged when 1,502 tons of construction debris is disposed of at the Parish Landfill.

According to Parish records, Mr. Lopez stopped visiting the Landfill a few days after our investigation started. Mr. Lopez stated that the Landfill Manager (Mr. Stewart) told him that the auditors would find him and ask him questions, and he should tell the auditors that he did not know him. If Mr. Stewart improperly directed Landfill employees to allow Mr. Lopez to dispose of roofing materials without paying a fee and accepted cash from Mr. Lopez, he may have violated state law. 1,2,3

## Recommendations

The Tangipahoa Parish Government should:

- (1) consult with legal counsel to determine the appropriate actions to be taken:
  - a. to recover funds paid directly to Mr. Stewart, and
  - b. to recover any unpaid user fees for the commercial dumping and unpaid scale tickets for scrap metal;
- (2) obtain quotes for scrap metal sales;
- (3) adopt a policy outlining the procedures to account for all outgoing scrap metal sales as an accounts receivable;
- (4) ensure all future payments for scrap metal sales are received; and
- (5) ensure all contractors are paying the appropriate user fees per ton of refuse dumped at the landfill.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

# **Attachment A**

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# Attachment A (Cont.)



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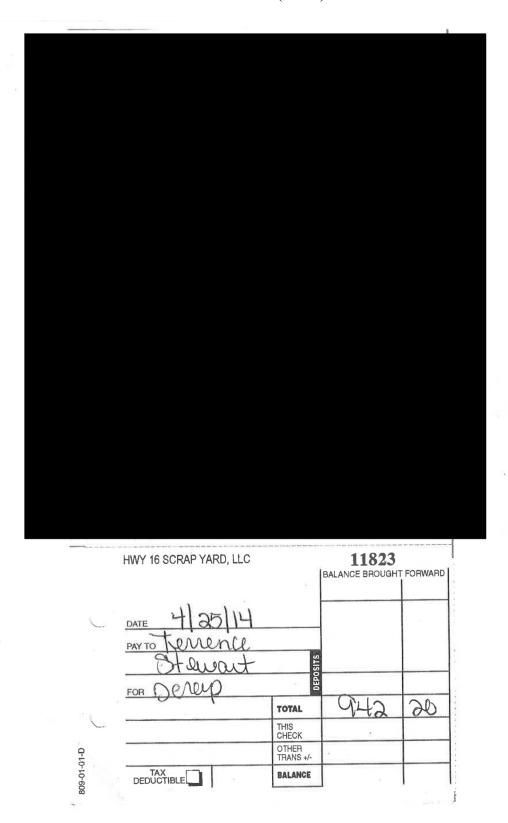
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I CHOOSE TO BE UNLOADED BY HWY 16 SCRAPYARD LLC AND RELEASE THEM OF ANY LIABILITY OR DAMAGES TO MY EQUIPMENT OR MYSELF. I ALSO STATE THAT THE SAID PROPERTY HAS BEEN PAID FOR AND IS OWNED BY ME. FREE OF ANY LIENS OR ENCUMBRANCES WHATSOEVER. AND THAT I AM DULY AUTHORIZED TO SELL SAME

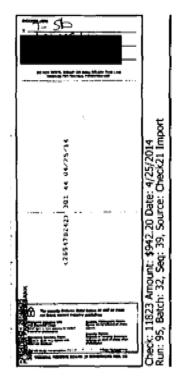
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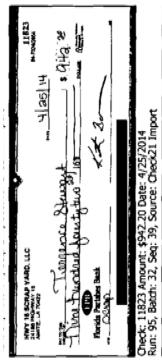
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# Attachment A (Cont.)



# Attachment A (Cont.)





# **Attachment B**

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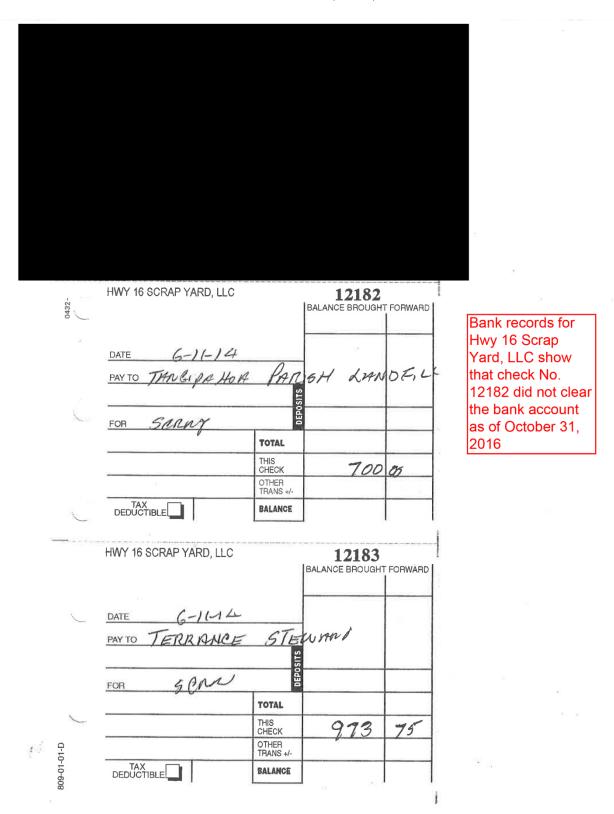
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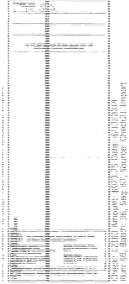
I CHOOSE TO BE UNLOADED BY HWY 16 SCRAPYARD LLC AND RELEASE THEM OF ANY LIABILITY OR DAMAGES TO MY EQUIPMENT OR MYSELF. I ALSO STATE THAT THE SAID PROPERTY HAS BEEN PAID FOR AND IS OWNED BY ME. FREE OF ANY LIENS OR ENCUMBRANCES WHATSOEVER. AND THAT I AM DULY AUTHORIZED TO SELL SAME

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# Attachment B (Cont.)



# Attachment B (Cont.)





# **Attachment C**

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# Attachment C (Cont.)

04/04/2016 MON 12:04 FAX



# SOLID WASTE DIVISION

# Fax Cover Sheet

**2**001/009

#### Terrance Stewart

Solid Waste Division Superintendent

#### Connie Henry

Solid Waste Division Office Manager

#### Donnie Colona

Solid Waste Division Foreman

From:
Terrance Stewart, Superintendent
Connie Henry, Office Manager
Donnie Colona, Foreman
Jason Williams, Methane Gas Technicia
Scale Attendant
To: Jill a Arena
Fax Number: 485 748-5936
Date: 4-4-16
Subject: Fixed Assets
Comments:

Tangipahoa Parish Regional Solid Waste Facility

Post Office Box 309, Amite, Louisiana 70422

985-878-4403 • FAX: 985-878-2361

terrance@tangipahoa.org • connie@tangipahoa.org • donnie@tangipahoa.org

# Attachment C (Cont.)

04/04/2016 MON 12:04 FAX					<b>2</b> 00	02/009
FY 2015		Cangipahoa Parish Go SETS MASTER BY COST -\$ 0.00 TO 01/01/2015 TO 12/3	ASSET NUMBER \$999,999,999.99			
ASSET NUMBER  DESCRIPTION BAR CODE  10175 Checked 12-16-15  BUILDING MAINTANCE BLDG.	STATUS T.S. ACTIVE	ASSET GROUP BUILDING 2000 Buildings	SERIAL NUMBER MANUF/MODEL	ACOUIRED 12/31/1986	<u>IN SERV</u> 12/31/1986	COST 65,000.00
LANDFILL HAND R  10200 Che Cked Q-11-15  PUMP LIFT AERATORS BAFFLES	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment		12/31/1988	12/31/1988	17,255.00
12455 Checked 12-16-15 To JD 670CH MOTOR GRADER	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	DW670CH586038	08/15/2003	08/15/2003	106,079.00
12819 Checked 12-16-15 T.S MOTOR - JOHNSON OUTBOARD		3000 Equipment	4013555	07/25/1996	07/25/1996	1,050.00
20019 Checked 12-16-15 7 2004 DODGE RAM TRUCK		4000 Licensed Vehicles	3D7KA28D54G205748 DODGE 2005 3/4 TON 2500 CREW CAB	03/18/2004	03/18/2004	16,777.00
20029CheckGl 12-16-15 Ti 1992 Chevrolet Kodiak Fuel Truck	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	IGBM7HIJKNJI06514	02/13/2004	02/13/2004	12,000.00
20056 Checked 12-16-15 T. TS100 A NEW HOLLAND TRACTOR 5-528 LANDFILL		3000 Equipment	ACP224528	09/21/2004	09/21/2004	24,750.00
20126 Checked 12-16-15 To JOHN DEERE 80C EXCAVATOR 4-425 LANDFILL	S'ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	FF080CX011425 80 C	03/10/2005	03/10/2005	69,563.60
20193 Chesked 12-16-15 TRACTOR - NEW KUBOTA M9000 4/WD	FACTIVE	3000 Equipment	53659	05/04/2001	05/04/2001	31,860.00
20194 Checked 12-16-15 T. TRACTOR - 1999 KABOTA L 3010		3000 Equipment	61881	07/16/1999	07/16/1999	14,947.00
20234 Checked 12-16-15 T. HP LASERJET 2420 PRINTER		5000 Office Equipment &		01/23/2006	01/23/2006	725.00
20262 Checked 12-16-1	SACTIVE	3000 Equipment	50932-001 STATE	04/13/2006	04/13/2006	3,500.00
20263 COMPUTER P4 8GHz 3.	ACTIVE	5000 Office Equipment &		07/06/2006	07/06/2006	1,373.00
20540 Checked 12-16-15	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	T0750CX912061	12/01/2006	12/01/2006	110,000.00
20541 Checked 12-16-15 FLAT BOAT  20626 Checked 12-16-15 FORKLIFT	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	BUJ619D9D607	12/07/2006	12/07/2006	579.00
20626 Checked 12-16-15 FORKLIFT	ACTIVE	3000 Equipment	A814V01722T	02/02/2007	02/02/2007	4,000.00
20632 DODGE DURANGO '07 " STEVE Perm	Jackson it office	4000 Licensed Vehicles Vehicle, for Ked at	1D8HD38P47F569548 Greng	06/07/2007	06/07/2007	17,907.0
TERRANCES fa300r01		03/28/2016 4:36:1	8PM		Page	1

# LEGAL PROVISIONS

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> **Louisiana Revised Statute** (**La. R.S.**) **14:67(A**) states, in part, "Theft is the misappropriation or taking of anything of value which belongs to another, either without the consent of the other to the misappropriation or taking, or by means of fraudulent conduct, practices, or representations. An intent to deprive the other permanently of whatever may be the subject of the misappropriation or taking is essential."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> La. R.S. 14:134 states, in part, "Malfeasance in office is committed when any public officer or public employee shall: (1) Intentionally refuse or fail to perform any duty lawfully required of him, as such officer or employee; or (2) Intentionally perform any such duty in an unlawful manner..."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> La. R.S. 42:1461(A) states, in part, "...employees of any 'public entity,' which, for purposes of this Section shall mean and include any department, division, office, board, agency, commission, or other organizational unit of any of the three branches of state government or of any parish, municipality, school board or district, court of limited jurisdiction, or other political subdivision or district, or the office of any sheriff, district attorney, coroner, or clerk of court, by the act of accepting such office or employment assume a personal obligation not to misappropriate, misapply, convert, misuse, or otherwise wrongfully take any funds, property, or other thing of value belonging to or under the custody or control of the public entity in which they hold office or are employed."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> **Louisiana Administrative Code 33:VII.711.D.5.a** states, "White goods may be stored in a unit separate from other solid wastes and shall be removed every 30 days. The facility shall maintain a log of dates and volumes of white goods removed from the facility."

# APPENDIX A

Management's Response



February 6, 2017

Mr. Daryl G. Purpera, CPA, CFE Louisiana Legislative Auditor Post Office Box 94397 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9397

Re: Tangipahoa Parish Council - Landfill

Dear Mr. Pupera,

First, I would like to thank you and your staff for the time and attention in this matter. Everyone we encountered during this investigation was more than helpful and professional throughout.

The Tangipahoa Parish Administration, Council Chairman Lionel Wells and Past Chairman Bobby Cortez reviewed the draft report with your staff. After further discussion by us, we agree with the recommendations of your report. On behalf of Parish Government, Administration and Council, we submit the following responses to your recommendations.

#### Recommendation #1

Consult with legal counsel to determine the appropriate actions to be taken:

I have consulted with our District Attorney, Scott Perrilloux. The parish will seek to recover any fees that are due.

#### Recommendation #2 - 4

Obtain Quotes for Scrap Metal Sales; Adopt a policy outlining the procedures to account for all outgoing scrap metal sales as an accounts receivable; Ensure all future payments for scrap metal sales are received:

Effective June 10, 2016, Tangipahoa Parish Government adopted procedures for disposal of scrap material. These procedures have been implemented to ensure internal controls over collection of receipts for scrap metal sales.

#### Recommendation # 5

Ensure all contractors are paying the appropriate user fees per ton of refuse dumped at the landfill:

Procedures have been put in place to ensure user fees are being appropriately charged. The parish will conduct random sampling of customer billings and will maintain a daily activity log.

Thanks again for your investigation into this matter.

Sincerely

Robby Miller Parish President

P.O. Box 215 Amite, LA 70422 · P: 985.748.3492 F: 985.748.7576 · www.tangipahoa.org

Trent Forrest

Emile "Joey" Mayeaux DISTRICT 6

James Bailey DISTRICT 2

Lionell Wells DISTRICT 7

Louis "Nick" Joseph DISTRICT 3 David P. Vial

DISTRICT B

DISTRICT 4 Harry Lavine DISTRICT 9

Carlo S. Bruno

H. G. "Buddy" Ridgel DISTRICT 5 **Bobby Cortez**