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Henderson police officials arrested

BY JASON BROWN
 Acadiana bureau
 August 28, 2012

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The Louisiana Inspector General's Office arrested the top two officers of the Henderson Police Department on Friday following a yearlong investigation into an illegal traffic citation quota system paid for through state grant dollars, according to affidavits filed in the St. Martin Parish Courthouse.

Henderson Police Chief Leroy Guidry, 63, and Deputy Chief Oliver Mack Lloyd, 61, were arrested on nine counts of filing or maintaining false public records, nine counts of public payroll fraud, and one count each of malfeasance in office and criminal conspiracy, according to an affidavit in support of arrest warrants filed late last week in St. Martin Parish.

Henderson Mayor Sherbin Collette said Monday that he plans to meet with the town attorney Monday afternoon to discuss how to proceed.

"As of now he's still police chief," Collette said.

According to the affidavits, the investigation began in August 2011 after the Office of Inspector General received a complaint alleging officers were receiving illegal payments from the city for traffic citations issued on Interstate 10.

The complainant stated that officers who participated in the traffic enforcement program were being paid \$15 for each citation written, and were expected to write two tickets per hour, amounting to a quota system. The payments were made through a state grant from the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission between the years of 2009 and 2011.

The affidavit says more than \$16,000 in fraudulent payments went to officers involved in the program from the \$189,000 state grant received by the city.

The town of Henderson received about \$2.4 million dollars in fines and

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forfeitures, primarily from citations issued by officers, which accounts for more than 80 percent of the town's overall revenue, the affidavit says.

In an interview Monday morning, Collette said he had not seen the affidavits.

"If anything was done wrong, it was done unintentionally," Collette said.

Collette said he was not aware of any pay-per-ticket system but acknowledged recommending that officers issue two tickets per hour. The mayor said that was the only way the program would be financially feasible.

"You can't let them work six hours and issue one ticket," Collette said. "Whatever is done out there, you have to be making money with it. You can't be losing money at it. In this office, we paid by the hours only. We knew nothing about tickets for \$15."

State law prohibits a state agency, political subdivision or law enforcement agency to offer a financial reward or other benefit to a law enforcement officer based on the number of citations the officer issues.

The increased revenue from the citations also allowed town officials to authorize 100 percent payment of health insurance coverage for the police chief, the mayor and their spouses, the affidavit says.

Records indicate the town paid more than \$15,000 in health insurance coverage for Guidry and his spouse from August 2010 and February 2012, the affidavit says, adding that this benefit is not offered to other town employees' spouses.

In a February interview with Guidry, investigators asked him if the officers' time sheets reflected hours they worked on the program.

Guidry told investigators that he did not use time sheets or written work schedules, which "allowed his agency to save money on cost of paper," the affidavit says.

The chief said he used a "productivity" system to ensure that officers were active when they worked the traffic enforcement program by paying officers \$30 per hour if they wrote at least two citations per hour. However, the chief denied the existence of a quota system, the affidavit says.

The mayor acknowledged to investigators that officers were required to write at least two citations per hour. He told investigators that he did not know quotas were illegal, the affidavit says.

Inspector General Stephen Street declined to say whether additional charges could be filed against other people as a result of the ongoing investigation.

"As the investigation is still open, I am going to confine my comments to the warrants in the public record and the arrests that were made, and not speculate on any additional charges at this time," Street wrote in an email Monday.

