

City of Centralia Terminates Recreation Dept. Director –

CENTRALIA, IL ([ECWd](#)) –

On December 6, 2013, the [City of Centralia](#), IL [terminated the employment](#) of the Recreation Department Director, Mr. Robert “Spanky” Smith. Mr. Smith had been employed with the city since March 29, 2001 with a final salary of \$48,935.00 per year.

Information obtained thru FOIA and other sources, tell us that this termination was at least in part due to Mr. Smith allowing a Mr. Wells to use a public building (pictured above) as a temporary residence while Wells was going thru a divorce. He also had cable television installed, at city expense, for Wells. While this may seem trivial to some readers, it is a clear violation of [Article VIII, Section 1 \(a\)](#) of the Illinois Constitution which reads: *“Public funds, property or credit shall only be used for public purposes”*. Violations of this type can be used as a predicate for felony charges of Official Misconduct among others. Being found guilty of a felony of this type [in the performance of official duties](#) automatically forfeits any and all IMRF retirement funds. Whether the city decides to pursue these charges or not is still up in the air.

One item we noticed in reviewing the responsive documents to our FOIA request was that up to and including the month of [September 2013 \(page 5\)](#), the Charter Communications bill for the recreations department was always approximately \$104.00 per month and did not include cable television. Starting in [October 2013 \(page 5\)](#), the bill jumped to \$184.36 per month and included charges for cable television basic and expanded, to include “sports view” – I mean, why not get it all when the taxpayers are paying for it? So it [appears](#) Mr. Wells wasn’t satisfied with just a place to live, he had to be entertained

also. The last bill we received was the December 2013 bill and it still listed the cable television service being active and sits at around \$165.00.

The purpose of writing this article is to show how local government is supposed to work when problems of this type are discovered. The City of Centralia discovered, through whatever means, that one of their employees were violating the law in his official capacity. They investigated the allegations, determined cause existed, and immediately terminated his employment. This is the way government is supposed to operated when things such as this come to their attention.

We contrast that with what routinely happens in Edgar County and the City of Paris...which is...nothing... Over the past several years there have been several employees and elected officials identified as having lied, committed forgery, submitted false claims for payment, submitted false justifications for grants, bid-rigging, using city credit cards for family trips to Disney in Florida, free driveways, credit cards used for spouse airplane tickets, getting paid twice for working the same hours, opening secret bank accounts, taking out illegal loans, conflicts of interest, selling guns illegally, use of prisoners to roof a house, and finally, shafting the taxpayers of Edgar County out of \$100,000.00. All of these incidents and more were well documented, presented to public officials, and nothing happened. Oh, except a resignation from the airport, and even then they are giving him a "letter of appreciation" for his "hard work" when what he should be getting is an all expenses paid vacation in the county jail they refuse to approve funds to fix. As a matter of fact, resources were spent covering everything up, including instructing the county auditing firm to insert a blatant lie in the 2012 audit.

This is why we must keep attending local meetings and keep bringing these items up. If we don't, no one will ever be held accountable. If public officials refuse to hold people accountable to the law, we will hold them accountable thru

public opinion by *“Fostering a climate of public opinion which regards the corrupt, however rich and powerful they may be, with the contempt they deserve.”* Dr. Livingston Smith.

Sleep well, 2014 is just around the corner.

A New Year brings exciting new things. We will update our website and use a different name for our publishing arm—IllinoisLeaks.com—the layout will remain the same for now and you can still use the same Edgar County Watchdogs website. A New Year also brings with it a renewed determination to bring light into the dark corners of our local public bodies throughout the state!

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