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Fired City Employee Charged with Embezzlement from East Lansing's Parking System ^[1]

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By:

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(Photo by Raymond Holt)

Story updated at 2:30 p.m.: The Ingham County Prosecutor's Office has issued a two-count felony warrant for Colter Ann Tupper related to theft from the City of East Lansing's parking system.

Tupper was recently fired from her job in the City's parking system, and a source tells ELi that the prosecution will be made more difficult because City staff did not preserve video evidence related to the charges.

The charges against Tupper include larceny, a felony punishable by up to four years in prison, and embezzlement between \$1,000 and \$20,000, a felony punishable by up to five years.

Tupper pleaded not guilty in East Lansing's 54B District Court yesterday.

ELPD has referred all questions about the case to the prosecutors. Scott Hughes of the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office told ELi today that the complaint filed "does not allege any co-conspirators" but that he cannot say much more because of the stage of the prosecution.

The embezzlement is alleged to have occurred at the City's new high-tech parking system office located on the ground floor of the new Albert Avenue parking garage, just across the alley from Target.

An anonymous source tells ELi that a large sum of cash was taken, cash that had been collected from City parking lots during an MSU home football game.

The larceny case is said by the prosecutors to have occurred at the Charles Street parking ramp. (That's the brick-faced parking garage above Buffalo Wild Wings.)

The anonymous source tells us this involved theft of a laptop computer. The computer was left by someone accidentally, turned into the parking office's "lost and found," and then stolen, allegedly by Tupper.

The source tells ELi that when the laptop owner tried to get the laptop, he was told it counted as "abandoned property," and that the owner found it himself by using the "find my phone" feature installed on his computer. The source also says that a parking supervisor saw a video recording of Tupper taking the laptop but that the recording was not preserved.

Mikell Frey, communications coordinator for the City, confirmed a lack of formal policy on managing surveillance recordings but did offer insight as to how the Parking Division's camera DVR system works.

"There are currently 74 parking system cameras that are motion activated and only record motion sequences," Frey wrote in an email to ELi. "Footage is recorded on hard drives and stored for approximately 20-30 days on average, depending on location, quality and number of motion sequences. When storage is exceeded, the older stored motion sequences are recorded over. The video server equipment is only accessible by staff."

The parking system is struggling, according to our source, because besides Tupper being fired, a number of part-time employees in the parking system have left out of frustration about how this

situation was handled and how parking management works with employees.

The City's management has been externally silent about the matter since the issue came to light, although we are told the City Manager is trying to find the source of the leaks to ELi.

Reminder: If you want to send an anonymous tip to ELi, you can do so using our online contact form [2] or by sending a letter to our address (P.O. Box 115, East Lansing, MI 48826). If you want to communicate with us by email anonymously, you can do so by setting up an anonymous email account and sending email to publisher@eastlansinginfo.org [3].

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