

Ex-manager charged with 6 felonies

Bruce Townsend could face up to 21 years in jail if convicted of misappropriating township funds, the district attorney said.

By KARA FITZPATRICK
COURIER TIMES

Former Northampton manager Bruce Townsend was charged Wednesday with misappropriating more than \$67,340 in municipal funds.

If convicted, Townsend could face more than 20 years in prison, District Attorney Diane Gibbons said.

She filed six third-degree felonies against Townsend, who was dismissed as manager in November amid the investigation.

Townsend, 55, would be required to pay restitution if convicted, Gibbons said.

A preliminary arraignment has been scheduled for today in Doylestown, where District Judge Philip Daly will set bail.

Townsend's attorney, William L. Goldman Jr., said his client has been cooperating with the investigation. He said Townsend would be present for the arraignment.

According to the criminal complaint, Townsend made \$58,306

Tracing unauthorized purchases

worth of unauthorized purchases on three township credit cards, took \$4,904 in petty cash and transferred \$4,134 of sick time to vacation time.

From December 2001 to November 2006, Townsend made a total of 341 unauthorized transactions on the credit cards — an American Express Gold Card, a Sam's Club credit card and a Commerce Bank Visa, the complaint said. The cards were issued in Townsend's name.

Townsend purchased electronics, leather goods, liquor, various catalog merchandise and more, the complaint said. It also said he used the cards for lodging, movie tickets and cash advances.

On at least three occasions, Townsend used the credit cards to buy airline tickets and even purchased a travel insurance policy, the complaint said.

The district attorney has charged Townsend with theft by unlawful taking, receiving stolen property, theft by failure to make required

See **TOWNSEND**, 2A

Townsend: Former manager charged

From Page 1A

disposition of funds, misapplication of entrusted property, unlawful use of a computer and other computer crimes and access device fraud.

Each charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years. However, Gibbons said counts are often merged. She estimated Townsend could face a jail sentence of up to 21 years.

Bucks County Detective Terry Lachman began investigating the case in October after someone notified the District Attorney's Office of alleged misappropriation of township funds, the complaint said.

During a Nov. 1 meeting at the township building, Lachman informed Townsend that he was being investigated. At that meeting, Townsend admitted to making numerous unauthorized and personal purchases using two township credit cards, the complaint said.

Also at that meeting, Lachman and Townsend reviewed the American Express and Sam's Club card statements from 2005 and 2006 and Townsend indicated which purchases were personal, the complaint said.

The supervisors were advised of the investigation immediately, and Townsend

was placed on administrative leave the following day.

On Nov. 3, Lachman learned from acting manager Kathleen Goldhahn that a third card, the Commerce Bank Visa, had also been issued to Townsend, the complaint said. Lachman retrieved records from 2002 through 2006 for that account.

Townsend's resignation was accepted Nov. 6.

During a January meeting, Lachman again interviewed Townsend, who was with his attorney. At that meeting, the 2002 to 2006 statements for the three credit cards were reviewed and Townsend indicated which purchases were unauthorized, the complaint said.

According to supervisors Chairman Peter Palestina, bills cannot be paid until approved by the board. Once a bill is approved, two authorized signatures are needed on a check for payment. Because the case is ongoing, Palestina declined to go into further detail regarding the workings of township finances.

Townsend, who has not returned multiple calls for comment since the investigation began, started as the township manager in 1981. His annual salary in 2006 was \$107,000.

Kara Fitzpatrick can be reached at 215-949-4190 or kfitzpatrick@phillyburbs.com.